THE ARCHIVE COLLECTION

PROG ROCK

40 GREATEST PROG ALBUMS

“PRETENTIOUS? I CAN’T SEE IT” 50 YEARS OF **KING CRIMSON**

“A FLASH OF MAGIC” **ELP** ON TOUR

GENESIS “WE GET OFF ON FANTASY!”

“A GOOD CONCEPT” PINK FLOYD

...AND THE FULL STORY OF ’70s PROG ROCK

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS

CLASSIC ARCHIVE FEATURES

PLUS!
- YES
- MOODY BLUES
- JETHRO TULL
- CARAVAN
- VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR
- SOFT MACHINE

AFTERWORD BY ROGER DEAN

GATEFOLDS | CONCEPTS | COLLECTABLE PROG | FLUTE SOLOS

FROM THE MAKERS OF UNCUT

JOE STEVENS

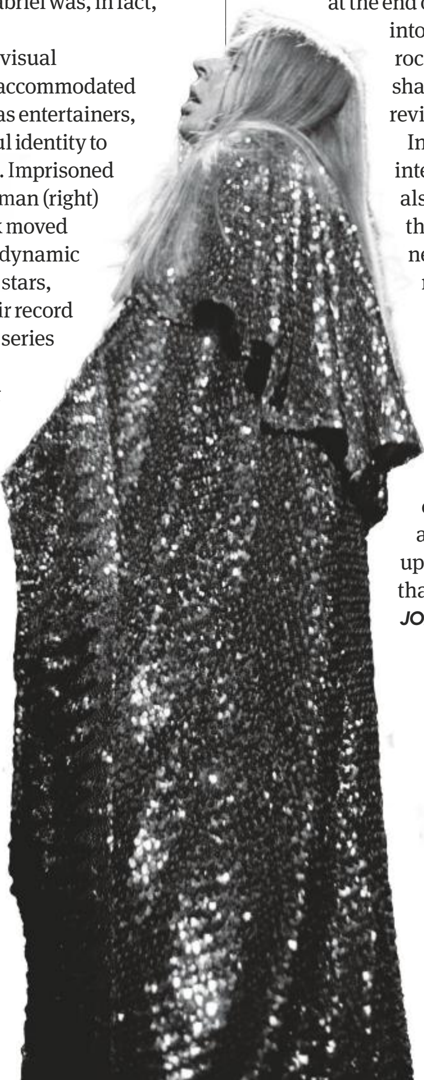
Welcome back my friends...

STRANGE to relate, since prog is one idiom where he's never set foot, but a decisive figure in the music's development is Mick Jagger. This isn't so much for his encouragement of King Crimson – who appeared with The Rolling Stones at Hyde Park in 1969. More because for many of the musicians who would come to define this music over the next decade, Jagger represented the apogee of a traditional rock showmanship to which they could never aspire.

These instead were people with different musical ambitions and inspirations, but no less determination – even if the traditional exchange between star and audience was not for them. It might be hard to reconcile with the fox head, the batwings and the makeup, but in his theatrical fronting of the classic Genesis lineup in 1973 Peter Gabriel was, in fact, retreating from the limelight.

With their masks and strong visual presentation, prog musicians accommodated their perceived shortcomings as entertainers, and in so doing gave a powerful identity to this new and expansive music. Imprisoned behind keyboards, Rick Wakeman (right) embraced capes. As their work moved away from songs and towards dynamic instrumental suites, our cover stars, Pink Floyd, retreated from their record sleeves and, live, hid behind a series of disorientating projections. When they launched *The Dark Side Of The Moon* at the London Planetarium, they didn't even turn up, which articulated their position rather well.

What was important was the music, and this now accommodated a huge new range of influences beyond rock's traditional base in rhythm'n'blues. Literary inspirations. Classical motifs. While a listener's mind wandered into the fantastic landscape of a Roger Dean sleeve, musicians stretched themselves into strange new shapes beyond the map of traditional songs. You engage with a prog LP less like a record and more like a book: prepared for a journey, and expecting the unexpected. No wonder it was a genre that thrived on the university circuit.



RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS

In this latest addition to our *Ultimate Genre Guide* series, you can read about the birth of UK prog rock (in prog's house there are many mansions, but here we will concentrate on the UK golden age, 1968-1978, so no Focus, no Rush, no Marillion, and no angry emails please) from the most musically accomplished end of the psychedelic movement at the end of the 1960s, to its mutation into vaguely complex radio-friendly rock (Genesis), into scary new shapes (King Crimson) or benign revisiting of old glories (Yes).

In addition to the classic interviews collected here, you'll also find deep engagement with the main players in substantial new career reviews. You'll find a rewarding trip to the wilds of the Soft Machine catalogue, a guided tour of the double entendre-filled world of Caravan and a moving and insightful view of the career of Emerson, Lake and Palmer.

You'll also enjoy debating the contents of our Top 40 prog albums list, all of which stand up to scrutiny today. It's the show that never ends... ●

JOHN ROBINSON, EDITOR

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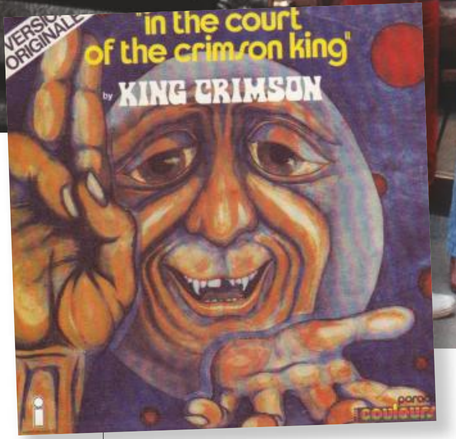
Mike Ratledge with the Soft Machine, Amougies Festival, Belgium, October 1969; (below) Mike Oldfield on Hergest Ridge, Herefordshire, 1974

Van Der Graaf Generator, Paris, May 25, 1974: (l-r) Peter Hammill, Hugh Banton, Guy Evans, David Jackson



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PHILIPPE GRAS/ALAMY; IAN DICKSON/GETTY; MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY (2)

Peter Gabriel live with Genesis, London, 1973

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THE MOODY BLUES

Destination: “enlightenment”. Third eyes open, a Birmingham band reject the club scene for classical motifs and religious overtones. *By Nigel Williamson*

ONE night in early 1967, The Moody Blues were playing a godforsaken cabaret club in Newcastle. Dressed in frightful matching blue suits, they were feeling utterly dispirited. It had been two years since they had hit No 1 with “Go Now” and they had failed to chart since.

Their dejection turned to despair when, after a lacklustre show, an unhappy punter barged his way into the backstage closet that served as a dressing room and told them they were the worst band he had ever seen. Recognising a degree of truth in the complaint, guitarist Justin Hayward burst into tears.

Yet it proved to be not only a turning point in The Moody Blues’ fortunes but also a catalytic moment in the development of what would soon come to be known as progressive rock.

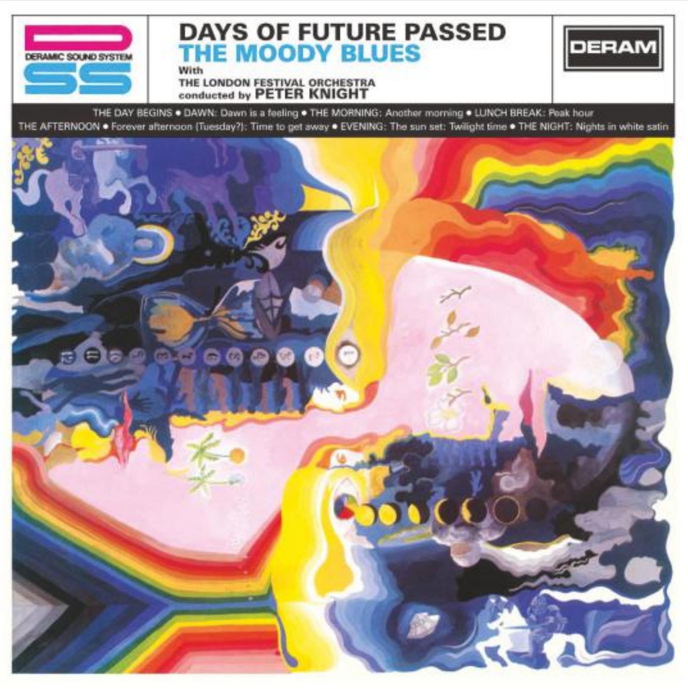
With the Summer Of Love about to burst forth in all its tie-dyed glory, the suits were mothballed and replaced by beads and kaftans. More significantly, the group underwent a complete musical rethink. Within weeks, Hayward’s “Fly Me High” was released as The Moody Blues’ next single. A barely coded drug song (“*I’m up to the eyes and I love everyone*”), it didn’t chart but the group took encouragement from a renewed sense of purpose on an engaging early example of the psychedelic acid-pop that was about to become the sound of 1967.

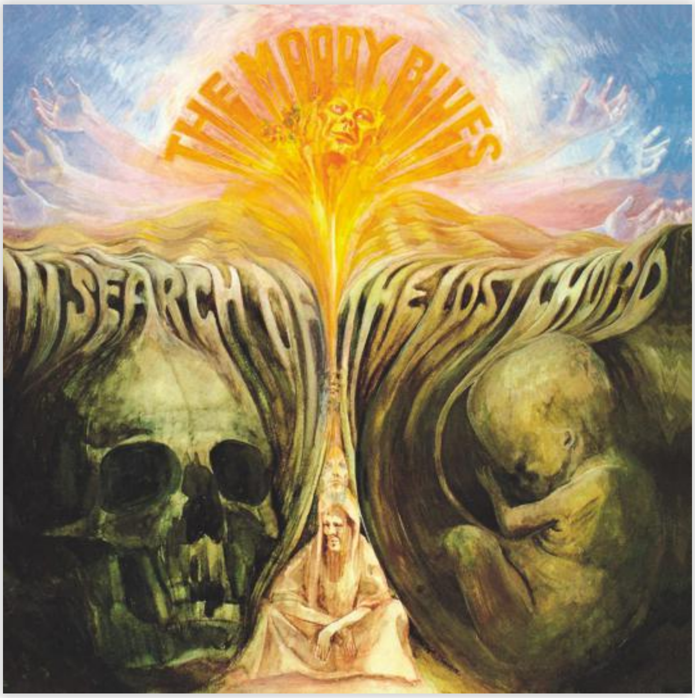
Shortly after, keyboard player Mike Pinder purchased a second-hand Mellotron. In the early 1960s Pinder had worked for the manufacturer, Streetly Electronics in Birmingham, and allegedly found the machine unloved and unused in the working men’s club at Dunlop’s Birmingham factory.

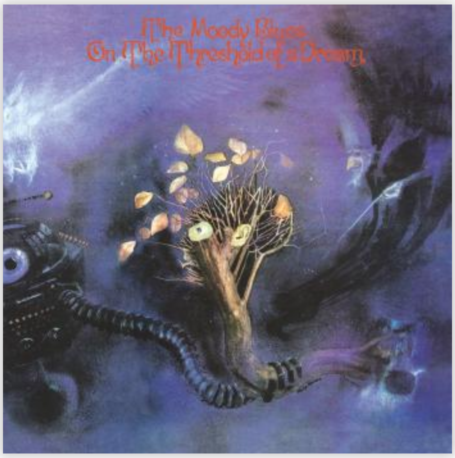
A mechanically complex instrument that used a system of pre-recorded tapes to create an atmospheric quasi-orchestral sound, the Mellotron opened up new possibilities in symphonic pop. Psych was about to become prog.

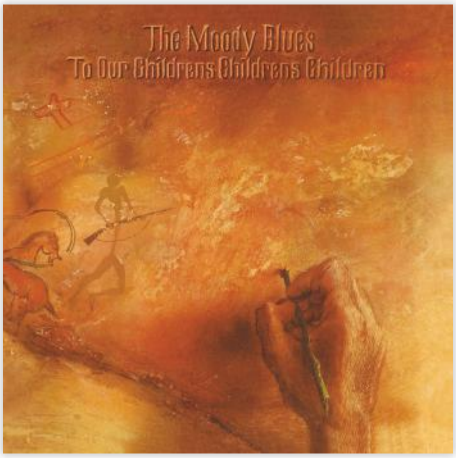
The Beatles had recently hired a Mellotron for use on “‘Strawberry Fields Forever”, and its trippy, swooning textures would soon become a key prog motif in the hands of Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Genesis, Yes and others. However, few mastered the notoriously temperamental instrument better than Pinder, and The Moody Blues put the Mellotron at the heart of their next single, “Love And Beauty”, and their debut album, *Days Of Future Passed*, which they spent much of the summer of 1967 recording.

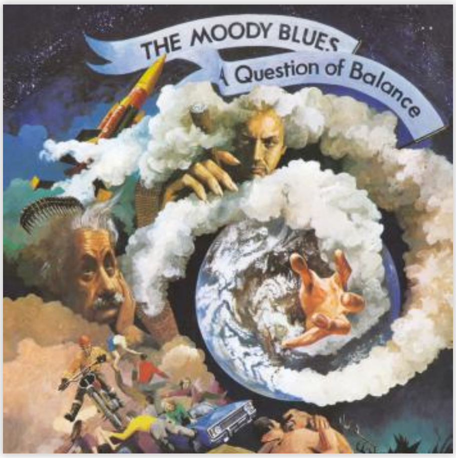
By the time of its release, *Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* and Pink Floyd’s *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* had already dramatically changed the musical landscape. Yet *Days Of Future Passed* aspired to a higher ambition. As executive producer Hugh Mendl wrote in the ➢

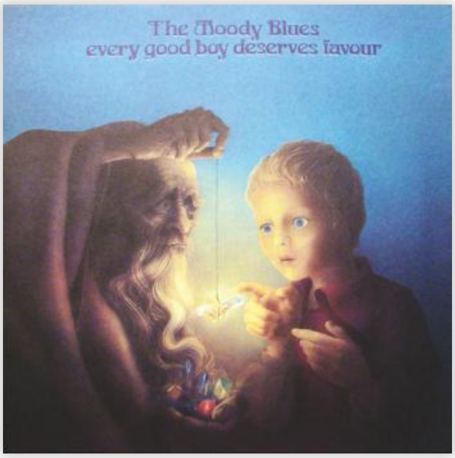

DERAMIC SOUND SYSTEM
DAYS OF FUTURE PASSED
THE MOODY BLUES
With
THE LONDON FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA
conducted by PETER KNIGHT
DERAM
THE DAY BEGINS • DAWN: Dawn is a feeling • THE MORNING: Another morning • LUNCH BREAK: Peak hour
THE AFTERNOON • Forever afternoon (Tuesday?): Time to get away • EVENING: The sun set: Twilight time • THE NIGHT: Nights in white satin

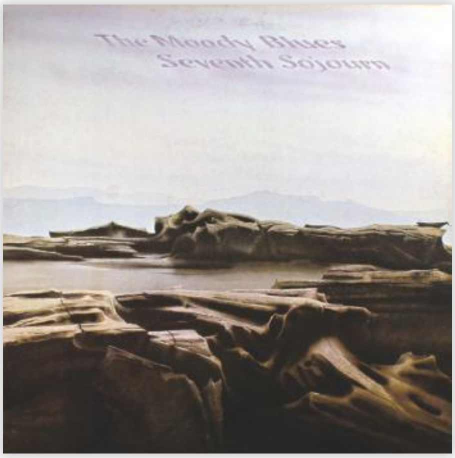

THE MOODY BLUES
IN SEARCH OF THE LOST CHORD


The Moody Blues
On The Threshold of a Dream


The Moody Blues
To Our Childrens Childrens Children


THE MOODY BLUES
A Question of Balance


The Moody Blues
every good boy deserves favour


The Moody Blues
Seventh Sojourn

THE MOODY BLUES
Octave

DAYS OF FUTURE PASSED
DERAM, 1967
9/10

IN SEARCH OF THE LOST CHORD
DERAM, 1968
8/10

ON THE THRESHOLD OF A DREAM
DERAM, 1969
7/10

TO OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN'S CHILDREN
THRESHOLD, 1969
6/10

A QUESTION OF BALANCE
THRESHOLD, 1970
6/10

EVERY GOOD BOY DESERVES FAVOUR
THRESHOLD, 1971
5/10

SEVENTH SOJOURN
THRESHOLD, 1972
5/10

OCTAVE
DECCA, 1978
6/10

THE MOODY BLUES
FLY ME HIGH
Really haven't got the time
DECCA
F 12607

DERAM
THE DECCA RECORD CO. LTD.
℗ 1967
Tyler Music
GEMA
BIEM NCB
MADE IN ENGLAND
45 RPM
DM 161
NIGHTS IN WHITE SATIN
(Hayward) (As featured in the Deramic Sound System Album "Days of Future Passed")
THE MOODY BLUES
Producer: Tony Clarke

album's liner notes: "The Moody Blues have at last done what many others have dreamed of and talked about: they have extended the range of pop music, and found the point where it becomes one with the world of the classics."

Looking for a project to test new developments in stereophonic sound, Decca had initially suggested that the Moodies record an album for rock band and orchestra, based on Dvorak's *New World Symphony* (a melody from which would later form the basis of "Voices In The Sky" on their next album).

In the event, the band brought their own compositions to the project, a set of songs built around the concept of a day in the life of everyman and which borrowed from Indian raga the notion that each piece of music should reflect a different time of day.

With Peter Knight conducting the London Festival Orchestra and material contributed by all five band members – Hayward, Pinder, bassist John Lodge, flautist Ray Thomas and drummer-poet Graeme Edge – the group fused spoken-word poetry, orchestral interludes and sweeping ballads into a cohesive entity in which you couldn't see the join. Culminating in the epic "Nights In White Satin", the world's first concept-driven, symphonic prog-rock album had arrived.

Over the next five years, *Days Of Future Passed* was followed by six further albums of cosmic troubadourism in earnest pursuit of the meaning of life and man's place in the universe.

The high tide of their hallucinogenically inspired vision came on *In Search Of The Lost Chord* (1968) and *On The Threshold Of A Dream* (1969), a brace of classic 'head' albums that retain a special place in the acid-fried minds of those taking their first LSD trips at the time.

On *In Search Of The Lost Chord* the symphony orchestra was replaced by the band's own multi-instrumental eclecticism, as harpsichord, cello, autoharp, tambura, sitar, flute, saxophone, oboe and French horn were added to the dominance of Pinder's Mellotron, by now firmly established as The Moody Blues' signature sound.

Bookended by Edge's poetry, the 10 songs were heavily influenced by the band's own LSD experimentation, seeming to follow the lysergic arc of an acid trip, from the initial rush of "Ride My See-Saw" to the closing transcendence of the sitar-laden "Om", via the dreamy "Voices In The Sky" and "The Best Way To Travel", on which Pinder took us "*speeding through the universe*" as his Mellotron scaled new heights of invention.

The centrepiece, though, was "Legend Of A Mind", a glorious tribute to LSD's high priest Timothy Leary that ended in an ecstatic hallucinogenic rave-up with the Mellotron panning from one speaker to the other: "*He'll fly the astral plane/Takes you trips around the bay/Brings you back the same day/Timothy Leary.*"

You didn't have to be on acid to enjoy the trip, but it sure as hell helped, as Pinder freely admitted. "Listening to music, you enjoy it most when you're in a meditative state and I think the drug influence was able to put you into that state instantly," he said.

While lacking the holistic quality of its predecessor, *...Threshold Of A Dream*, released just nine months later, was almost as good. In a neat reversal of the American R&B steals that had provided the Moodies with their pre-prog repertoire, "So Deep Within You" was a good enough song for the Four Tops to cover, while Hayward's "Never Comes The Day" and "Are You Sitting Comfortably" stand among his finest yearning prog ballads.

In the group's quest for mind-expanding profundity, many of the lyrics now inevitably come across as kitsch

The climax, though, was Pinder's epic closing "Have You Heard/The Voyage" sequence. Another celebration of lysergic liberation, it ended with a Ligeti-like drone from the Mellotron – or rather didn't end, as the original vinyl LP continued the sound into the run-out groove and carried on playing until the needle was lifted, an effect sadly lost on CD transfer.

At the 1969 Isle Of Wight Festival, The Moody Blues were in their cosmic pomp and video footage of their performance finds them damn near stealing the show with a bewitching Saturday-evening set full of acid vibes that "charmed the loon pants off the crowd" with a spectacular sunset as the backdrop.

However, the backlash was about to hit. *To Our Children's Children's Children* (1969) was heavily inspired by the Apollo 11 moon landing, without capturing the zeitgeist in the way that "Space Oddity" did, while *A Question Of Balance* (1970) gave the Moodies their biggest hit single since "Go Now" with the bombastic "Question", which Hayward claimed he had written as a protest against the Vietnam War.

Yet the group's existential pontificating was becoming repetitive and their florid songs increasingly formulaic and flabby. Prog-rock pioneers The Moody Blues may have been, but after the initial boldness of their experiments with orchestra and Mellotron, there was not a great deal of musical progression after 1970 as the acid-laced beauty and sonic adventure of their imperial phase gave way to syrup and saccharine.

Alongside a new generation of prog bands whom they had helped to inspire, The Moody Blues no longer sounded progressive but safe, unchallenging and so conservatively non-abrasive that it smacked of artistic cowardice. The experimentations of King Crimson seemed bolder, the visions of Yes more epic and ELP were brasher and more bombastic if you liked your prog-rock with added pomp and circumstance.

The band seemed to have sensed they were approaching some sort of crisis. Critics – never the band's most faithful friends –

Late bloom: Moody Blues reunited (below, minus Mike Pinder), 1978

ANDRE CSILLAG/SHUTTERSTOCK

Going from florid to formulaic: the Moodies ive in 1970

Asking fewer questions: (top, l-r) Graeme Edge, Ray Thomas, Mike Pinder, Justin Hayward and John Lodge in the early 1970s

were now openly sneering. The "Pseudy Blues" was one, admittedly pretty good, popular nickname while *Rolling Stone* called them the "Sistine Chapel of popular music", implying that the rococo decoration well in order in a place of worship had no place in a rock band. Yet while they teetered on the brink of the ridiculous – they had in their time quoted from *The Tibetan Book Of The Dead* and Descartes and featured lyrics about "*the secrets of our souls*" – there was something noble about the earnestness of their quest.

"We wanted to collect religious and psychedelic influences onto an album and turn them into a pathway into enlightenment," Hayward admitted many years later. "As young men, that's what we were searching for."

It hasn't all dated well. In the group's quest for mind-expanding profundity and desire to spread a New Age gospel of spiritual questing, many of the lyrics now inevitably simply come across as kitsch. "*He saw magnificent perfection, whereon he thought of himself in balance, and he knew he was*," recited in portentous biblical tones by a bloke who a few years earlier had ripped it up in a green satin suit in a rock'n'roll combo called El Riot & The Rebels, was always asking for trouble.

Yet it was still a very serious business. Some Moodies devotees saw them as prophets whose songs held the key to enlightenment and a higher consciousness. One female fan camped out in flautist Ray Thomas's garden for weeks, begging him to father her child, who was going to be the new messiah. On another occasion, a male fan got backstage and asked members of the band to lay hands on him in the belief that their blessing would enable him to leave his body and permit God to enter his soul.

Unsurprisingly, a disillusionment with this kind of thing, and the music that prompted it, becomes a discernible feature of their seventh and eighth albums. True enough, they still preyed on classical music ("Isn't Life Strange" drew inspiration from Pachelbel's *Canon In D*), and both *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1971) and *Seventh Sojourn* (1972) went to No 1. But times in a small way were changing. "The Story In Your Eyes" single was their last to feature their signature Mellotron. Meanwhile John Lodge attempted to reconnect the band with more terrestrial concerns when he wrote the perception-correcting "I'm Just A Singer (In A Rock'n'Roll Band)", the closing song on *Seventh Sojourn*. The album was followed by six years of radio silence.

THRESHOLD
I'M JUST A SINGER (IN A ROCK AND ROLL BAND)
THE MOODY BLUES
TH 13
DECCA
MADE IN ENGLAND
THE DECCA RECORD CO. LTD.
A
A SIDE
45 RPM
℗ 1978 The Decca Record Co. Ltd.
ZXDR 62890
F 13809
STEREO
4.31
DRIFTWOOD
(Hayward)
(From the album 'Octave' TXS 129)
THE MOODY BLUES
Producer: Tony Clarke

Few expected the group to return from its abdication, especially after Pinder emigrated to America and Hayward and Lodge teamed up as a duo to record the highly successful 1975 album *Blue Jays* and the Top 10 single "Blue Guitar".

Raw from losing The Rolling Stones, Decca was desperate for new 'product' from the biggest-selling act on its roster. By 1977, under considerable record company pressure, all five members were cajoled, bullied, bribed or otherwise persuaded into reuniting. Pinder was the most reluctant and declined to return to Britain, so the band travelled to California to record.

The eruption of punk ostensibly made it an inopportune time for a Moody Blues comeback, yet 1978's *Octave* was welcomed by conservative fans with surprising fervour. Over the next decade the group went on to sell as many records as ever. It was as if 'year zero' had never happened.

After *Octave*, former Yes keyboardist Patrick Moraz replaced Pinder, who refused to tour, and the sound was updated with electronic drums and synths. It wasn't the same without the Mellotron, but albums such as *Long Distance Voyager* (1981) and *The Other Side Of Life* (1986) added to their tally of 10 platinum albums and helped boost sales past 70 million, a figure only exceeded among prog fellow travellers by Pink Floyd.

With a disarming lack of irony, one of their biggest-selling later songs was titled "Veteran Cosmic Rocker", while in their dotage the band took to hosting an annual Moody Blues Cruise on which fans joined them for a musical sea voyage around the Caribbean. If it wasn't quite a trip around the astral plane, it offered a comfortably plush substitute.

In recent years an extensive programme of expanded and remastered reissues of their 1967–72 canon has resulted in a partial re-evaluation of their influence, although their perceived pomposity has remained a stumbling block to anything more substantial. Half a century on, The Moody Blues remain the last great unrehabilitated band of the prog era. ●

PICTORIAL PRESS LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

"We had to rethink the whole scene"

Cabaret is dead, but albums and exotic philosophies are thriving. THE MOODY BLUES move with the times, "coining it" on the Continent and attracting huge but nefarious crowds with their heady "progressive pop". "We wanted to get out of the singles rat race," says Mike Pinder. "We didn't want to record singles we didn't believe in."

NME **AUGUST 31, 1968**

New Musical Express
TOM JONES TOUR DATES
It's the world of the Dave Clark Five

"CABARET is the graveyard of the fallen pop groups and we didn't want to stick there and die." So says Moody Blues drummer Graeme Edge explaining the outfit's change of policy. From the days of loud, raucous straight pop numbers like "Bye Bye Bird", the Moodies have turned into a forward-looking and highly creative group who are earning much praise from the people who know.

A few weeks ago, The Moody Blues played a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and gave everyone a nice surprise with their musical talent and abilities. Now, their near-perfect album *In Search Of The Lost Chord* is climbing the *NME* LP chart and a track from the album, "Voices In The Sky", enters the singles chart this week at No 27.

Graeme and lead singer Justin Hayward popped round to the office to drag me out for a drink where we talked about their developments and plans. "Justin and John had breakdowns during the cabaret," Graeme told me. "There's nothing worse than playing music you don't believe in to northern audiences who aren't interested.

"If we had stuck it, the group wouldn't have lasted until Christmas. We had to stop and rethink the whole scene."

There was a 12-month integration period for Justin and John after they joined the group, during which time Justin had to come together with four natives of Birmingham who, he found, thought differently from him musically.

"It was a gradual thing," he explained. "Graeme played me his type of records and I played him folk, things like Simon & Garfunkel albums that he had never ➢

PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

On the threshold: The Moody Blues in September 1968 – (l–r) Mike Pinder, John Lodge, Graeme Edge, Justin Hayward and Ray Thomas

GAB ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

heard before. In the end, we realised that we dug each other's music and after that, things were much easier."

The Moodies first discovered that they were all on the same wavelength while traveling back from a gig in their van one day. "John and Mike and I were sitting in one corner and Justin and Ray were over the other side talking and banging things," Graeme said. "Suddenly, we all got together and discovered we had all been thinking along the same lines. There was a big upsurge and in about 14 days, everyone had written songs and we were getting things together.

"We were managing ourselves during the cabaret period and things were getting very, very naughty. On the Continent we're coining it and we always have been. There, they think that if you haven't had a hit at home for a time it's because you've been busy playing all the time.

"In England, we were just a has-been group as far as people were concerned. The ballroom scene is dead, it doesn't mean a thing any more. We'd like to do some concerts but it's difficult knowing who to have on the bill. At the Queen Elizabeth Hall, I don't think people really knew much about the harpist."

Justin and Graeme, sipping alternate pints and whiskies, were both agreed that the single scene is not generally for the Moodies. Justin explained why. "If you get a hit single, you have to follow it," he began. "The last one got to around No 20; that was OK because it kept our name around, but it's no good going into the studio and being told to play for three minutes. You can't expect to do a good job that way.

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CITIES

"This single will probably help the LP and vice versa. Disc jockeys are more likely to play it than select a track for themselves."

Days Of Future Passed, the Moodies' last album, sold well in America and is now enjoying a rerun due to the single success of "Tuesday Afternoon", which was released there following many requests.

So impressed was he by the LP that veteran jazz star Stan Kenton has invited the boys to perform the entire work with his band at the Hollywood Bowl in the autumn. Now *In Search Of The Lost Chord* is doing very nicely over here and the group are already thinking ahead to their next album.

"We'd like to do a musical," Justin said. "It will take some working out to do it without the visual scene, but it's what we've been thinking about. I think it's important to have a theme running through an album, a thread to hang it all on."

They have been commissioned to write the scores for two major films and it is quite possible that the soundtracks will be released as albums, which could see the Moodies in the unusual position of having three LPs out simultaneously!

"...*Lost Chord* is our personal feelings," Graeme said. "The tracks are by different people and reflect their thoughts. We wrote it at the time when The Beatles were with the Maharishi. I think they expected too much from him, they were looking for a miracle.

"At the time, everyone was getting involved in false religions and false philosophies."

The acquisition of a Mellotron was another important move for The Moody Blues. "We spent all our food money on it," Graeme recalled with a smile. "Mike used to work for the company that makes Mellotron, so he took it all to pieces and did lots of things to it. They're very delicate and you have to be careful how you treat them.

"Once, the tapes got mixed up inside... It's a two-day job at the factory to sort them out, but Mike did it on stage with a bent coat hanger and a screwdriver in three-quarters of an hour!"

On the new album, the Moodies play 30 instruments, but Graeme admitted that they can't play half that number properly. What they do, it seems, is to hire whatever they need for the session and fiddle around until the sound they want is produced. "Mike has a way of bouncing the bow across the bass and when we record it and put all the tracks on it, it sounds like a whole row of musicians," Graeme revealed. "We don't mind cheating sometimes."

If cheating produces things like this album, perhaps there should be a bit more of it going on.

RICHARD GREEN

NME SEPTEMBER 28, 1968

New Musical Express

JOHNNY CASH

CARL PERKINS

STATLER BROS

JUNE CARTER

TOUR DATES

THE Moody Blues are the sleeping giants of the pop world. They seldom seem to make a dramatic impact upon the charts, but create significant best-selling albums and thoughtful, sensitive singles, like "Voices In The Sky", which meander about the lower regions of the Top 30 for months, being bought by other thoughtful, sensitive people who gradually pick up the good vibrations.

But the giants are waking! When they fly to America in October it is likely they will emerge from their musical cocoon with the kind of status which is now enjoyed by the Cream, Donovan and Jimi Hendrix.

Having enjoyed the company and conversation of both Justin Hayward and Graeme Edge, I went looking for two of the 'invisible' Moodies multi-instrumentalists – vocalists Mike Pinder and Ray Thomas – who hide out in the district of Esher.

Just occasionally you become involved with refreshingly gifted people in this business who turn an interview into a pleasant afternoon of dangling conversations and good sounds.

And so it was with Mr Pinder and Mr Thomas, who filled the lounge with the sounds of "Hey Jude" in stereo and the late 'hip comedian' Lord Buckley, who holds the key to just what those mystifying lyrics from McCartney are really about. We drank tea and become absorbed in discussion of yoga, Aldous Huxley and the "Life Force" about which we all know very little except that we should know more.

We sat drinking tea and playing at pop stars and reporters – just generally enjoying ourselves... and that, friends, is the secret of the Moodies' success.

"Two-and-a-half years ago we shut the factory down and almost broke up when Denny Laine, our vocalist, left," said Mike. "What stopped us was finding two people like John and Justin, who were so much on the same wavelength as us. From that point on we just started doing things that we really believe in – things that we really enjoyed like *Days Of Future Past*.

"It's not completely an accident when you find yourself successfully doing something that you like. If you really enjoy what you are doing, the effort is that much more and the work, therefore, that much better. The mental release is greater.

"On the same wavelength": the post-Denny Laine lineup with Hayward and Lodge, circa 1968

"*Days Of Future Past* was really a challenge, but it was something that we had always hoped would secretly happen. We shut ourselves away in the studios for 15 days, until it became our domain and what came out was what we thought we could do. What we did was really a diary of our experiences and ideas at that time – I'm sure that's how The Beatles and the Stones work now. It's really all a 'day in the life of …'.

"There was a time when I think The Rolling Stones were living in the shadows of The Beatles, about the period when they brought out 'We Love You', which followed Lennon and McCartney's 'All You Need Is Love'. Then they did that *Satanic Majesties* album, which didn't really seem to be them, but they've come right back to themselves now with '…Jack Flash', which is their real selves. These are examples of what I was saying about doing the thing they do best by doing what they really like, which is our scene, too!"

Ray arrived at the interview straight from his long run up the River Mole, where he had been hooking a few chub and perch. Fishing is a big thing down there at present and DJ David Symonds is just one of the friends who are often with them on the banks. From more recent reports I understand that Mike and Ray have been able to fish from the mantlepiece, but that's another story to be saved for a rainy day!

We took up the subject of progressive pop and their new album – *In Search Of The Lost Chord*, and was it possible for people to overemphasise the intellectual importance of pop music?

"We'd never put down people for playing 'Wild Thing' or 'Bend it'," said Ray. "It's just that we've been through all those scenes – we've had a top pop with 'Go Now'. We don't want to deliberately go out to make commercial music any more. I'd rather have the good opinion of one person, whose musical opinion I respect, than a load of commercial rubbish at No 1.

"I don't think that we are musically pretentious. Mike has already said that we do what we have lived through in musical terms. I mean, if I was really pretentious I'd go down and try and walk on the Serpentine or something. *In Search Of The Lost Chord* is just simply an adventure in mind really. There are a lot of critics who put the most fantastic interpretations on what we do, but it's made worthwhile by just the few who find what we put there.

"One of the most distressing things about the misrepresentation over the album has been that some people have got the impression we are a lot of drug addicts. We go over to Europe and these guys come at us rolling up their sleeves to show us the needle marks as if it were some kind of badge! An admission to the club! There are a lot of 'lurky' people who sidle up to you and whisper, 'Wanna drug?' because you are in a pop group and into things they cannot understand. That's very sad.

"See that photograph of my girl on the mantlepiece?" asked Ray suddenly. "Two daddy-long-legs appeared on that last night. We get a lot in here. That mark on the floor over there was a monster spider; took three swipes of *Life* magazine to kill that one!"

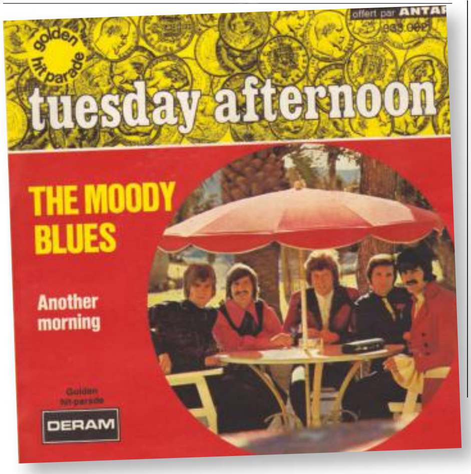
The Moody Blues have, of course, established for themselves a very strong following on the Continent and had only recently returned from a concert just outside Paris which was attended by 300,000 people.

"It was really a bit frightening," said Mike. "I'd never seen so many people in my life. There was an exhibition on there as well which included some items from the Vietnam war, including an American pilot's jacket riddled with bullets. That was frightening too and a bit grisly."

The Moodies now await their American tour with interest and hope they will be received as well 'live' as they have on record. They admit that live appearances are not too important to them now, although the travelling is the greatest hang-up. "Once we're on stage we find we're enjoying ourselves!"

Leaving the Moodies house after a very pleasant afternoon's chat – it got so pleasant that I'm not exactly sure which quote was which, but then I think that both Mike and Ray think along the same lines, so perhaps they will forgive me – I noticed rain clouds gathering. In a next-door garden an old man with a white beard was banging a couple of bits of wood together. But no, it couldn't have been. ***KEITH ALTHAM***

"THERE ARE A LOT OF 'LURKY' PEOPLE WHO SIDLE UP TO YOU AND WHISPER, 'WANNA DRUG?'"
RAY THOMAS



MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 19, 1968

Melody Maker
All-star line-up!
BLUES HEROES
TOM JONES ON TOUR
RINGO IN SELLERS FILM
JAZZ EXPO '68

GIVE a hand to Five Wise Men of the music scene, who've come bearing rare album gifts that have certainly paid off big dividends to discerning listeners. And, incidentally, big dividends to them. They're Mike Pinder, Graeme Edge, Ray Thomas, John Lodge and Justin Hayward. Collectively known as the Moody Blues.

The Moody Blues blazed their success trail on the single charts scene with "Go Now" and "Nights In White Satin". Both topped a million in sales. But now the Moodies are concentrating more and more on albums. And have rung the bell here, too. Their *Days Of Future Passed* has already sold 132,000 in America, *In Search Of The Lost Chord* – although only recently released in the States – has hit the 100,000 mark, and is similarly a Top 10 LP rider in Britain, where it has sold over 35,000,

Not that the Moodies have turned their backs on singles. Their latest is "Voices In The Sky". But the sights are set on the album market, for this, think the Moody Blues, is where the way to progress lies.

"We wanted to get out of the singles rat race," says Mike Pinder. "We didn't want to record singles we didn't believe in. This didn't apply to 'Go Now.' At the time we recorded it – three years ago – it wasn't a commercial song in the commercial sense. But we wanted to write down our own stuff and develop more." Hence the Moodies' concentration on the album scene.

"The album market is growing on a worldwide scale," says Mike. "Sales in America particularly are phenomenal. And they're growing here, too, with the increasing sales of stereo equipment.

"Sales of stereo records are now up to about 30 per cent in Britain. In America, stereo accounts for 60 per cent of the album market. I think LPs are really better value than singles. And people are buying them more because they are fed up with the same old sounds they get on singles.

"Albums give us a chance to experiment with new ideas. And buyers realise they offer more than just music to dance to. They can sit down and listen – get away on a trip of musical exploration. People like The Beatles and the Stones have appreciated this."

The Moody Blues are not bugged with any problems of recreating their studio sound "live".

"We're very successful on stage," adds Mike. "We get very near to our recorded sound."

They're so involved with their musical approach these days, in fact, that they are not even concerned that they probably passed up a chance to make a single that has now hit No 1 in the chart. To wit: "Those Were The Days".

"We were playing second on the bill with The Beatles on their last tour of Britain," recalls Mike. "Paul came into our dressing room and showed us this song. We liked it – but never got around to recording it."

A trifle lucky, perhaps, for Miss Mary Hopkin that the Moody Blues didn't jump in first when they had the chance! ● ***LAURIE HENSHAW***

KING CRIMSON

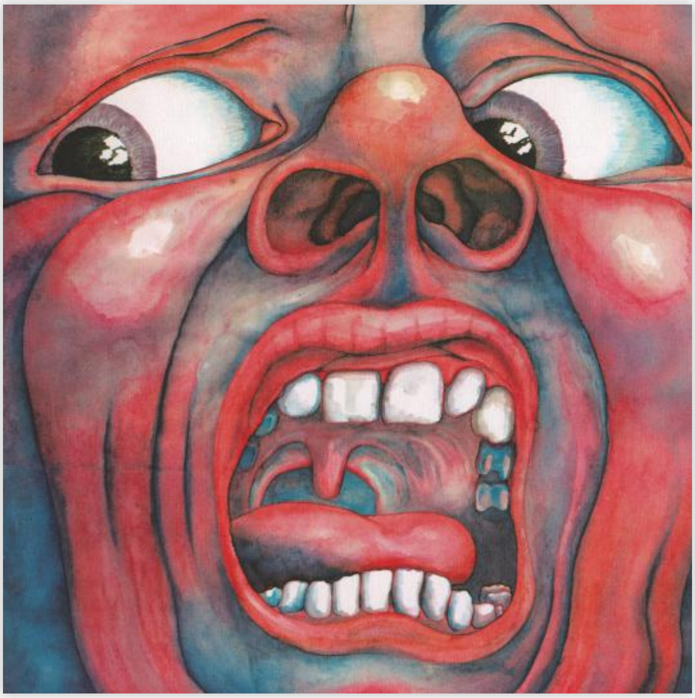
Amid much fanfare, a bunch of basement visionaries knock the crown of ’70s rock askew. An odyssey of blown minds and ever-shifting goalposts ensues. *By Sid Smith*

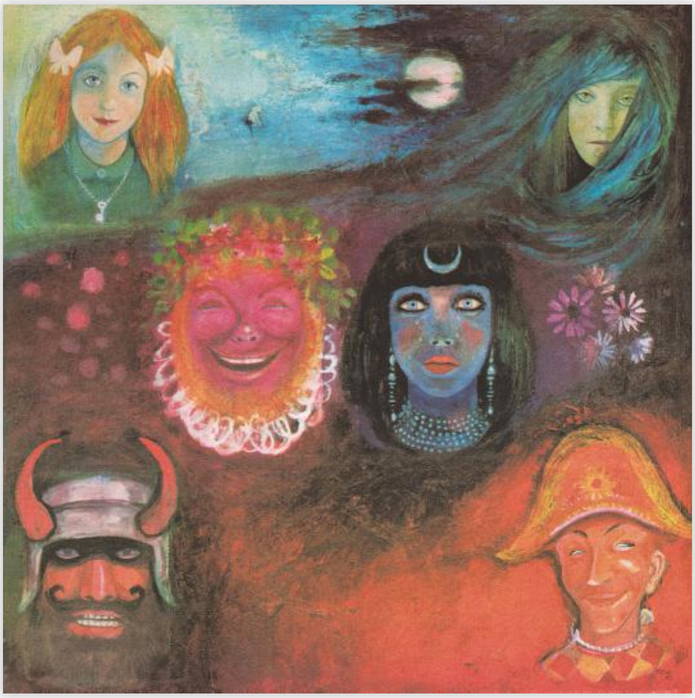
IN the early days of January 1969, London’s weather was prone to sleet. Understandably Robert Fripp, Michael Giles, Greg Lake, Ian McDonald and their roadie/lyricist Peter Sinfield were keen to get out of the cold as they lugged their equipment, including a Mellotron that took four people to lift, down into the new rehearsal room located by Sinfield a week earlier. In that cramped space underneath the Fulham Palace Road Café, they tinkered with cover versions that sometimes included “Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds” and Joni Mitchell’s “Michael From Mountains” as well as nascent original material.

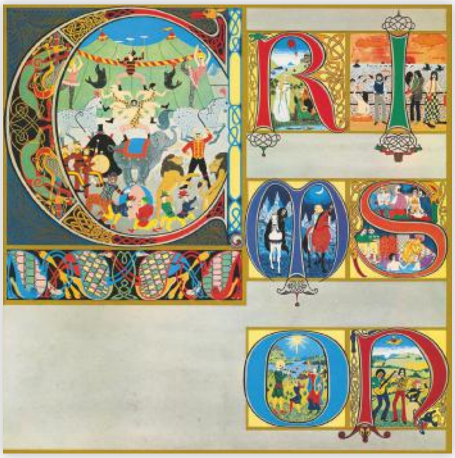
At this point they’d only been together a matter of weeks, with Lake the last to join. While Fripp, Giles and Lake had all worked on the West Country music scene in and around Bournemouth, Ian McDonald had only recently returned from overseas where he’d been stationed as a bandsman in the British army. As they searched for a name as well as a distinctive musical identity, Sinfield came up with King Crimson, from one of his poems that had been kicking around for a year or so and Ian McDonald had just memorably set to music.

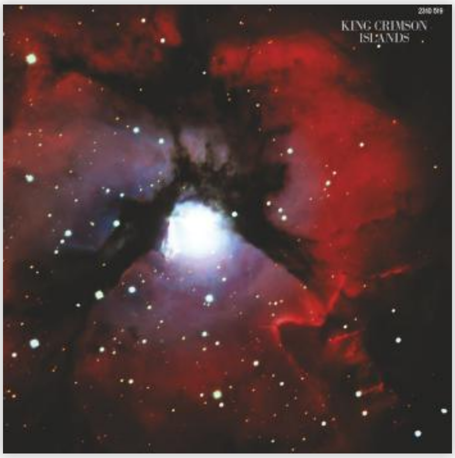
It was a grand gesture of a name, a declaration of intent and ambition by a band of unknown nobodies punching way above their weight. But a few more rehearsals down the line, this group decided they wanted to be the best band in the world. It might have seemed laughable, but everyone that made the trek down the Fulham Palace Road quickly found out that these pretenders to the throne really could play exceptionally well – and as “21st Century Schizoid Man” ably demonstrated, with the kind of dramatic precision that could knock their elders into the ground like so many tent pegs. If “…Schizoid Man” caught the violent immediacy of its geopolitical surroundings as America and the Soviet Union fought proxy wars in Asia against the backdrop of the moon landing, the portentous “Epitaph”, wreathed in funereal Mellotron and Greg Lake’s impassioned vocal, looked at the longer-term prospects of a future generation and offered a pessimistic assessment.

In the following weeks a small stampede of record companies beat a path to the basement seeking to sign up this new act. Bands such as Yes and Genesis, Pink Floyd, The Moody Blues and others watched in jaw-dropped amazement whenever Crimson gigged. Jimi Hendrix was spotted dancing around the tables at the back of the Revolution club loudly shouting that “this is the best band in the world”, famously going up to the young guitarist from Wimborne in Dorset asking to shake his hand. Some groups, such as Vertigo act Gracious, were so intimidated by the sheer, relentless musicality that, rather than





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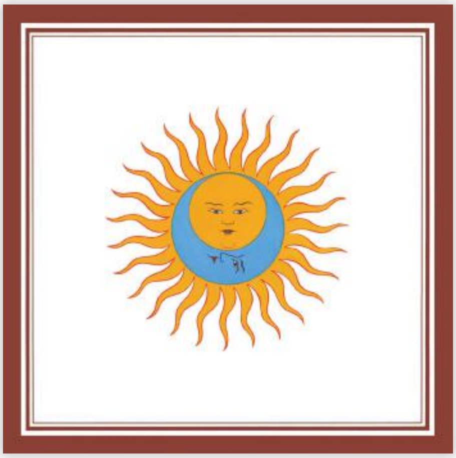
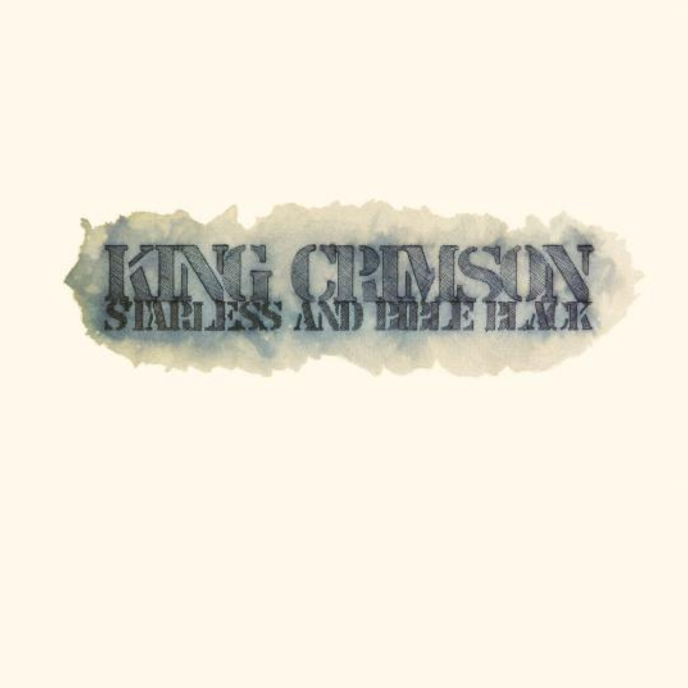



KING CRIMSON
STARLESS AND BIBLE BLACK

King Crimson/Red

IN THE COURT OF THE CRIMSON KING
ISLAND, 1969
9/10

IN THE WAKE OF POSEIDON
ISLAND, 1970
8/10

LIZARD
1970, ISLAND
6/10

ISLANDS
ISLAND, 1971
7/10

LARKS' TONGUES IN ASPIC
ISLAND, 1973
8/10

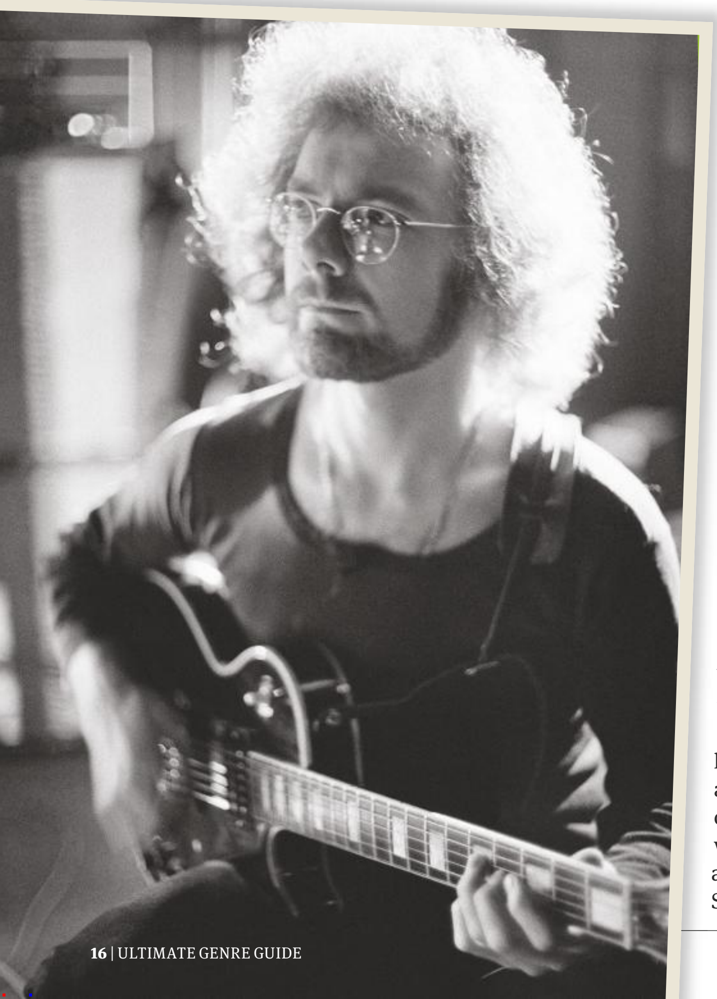
STARLESS AND BIBLE BLACK
ISLAND, 1974
7/10

RED
ISLAND, 1974
9/10

follow King Crimson on stage at a show in the provinces, they deliberately poured a pint of beer onto their power supply in order to spare their blushes.

Everything went fast for this band who were convinced they had a 'good fairy' looking out for them. By the time they supported The Rolling Stones at Hyde Park before 250,000 people in July, just two days after Brian Jones' death, they'd already recorded radio sessions for John Peel. In the summer, after sacking Moody Blues producer Tony Clarke, who was to have worked on the first album, they recorded and produced their debut, *In The Court Of The Crimson King*. Such was the word of mouth and press frenzy about the group, upon its release in October it entered the album charts on both sides of the Atlantic, aided and abetted by the unsettling gaze of the screaming face adorning the cover. One of the most striking LP covers ever to fill a record shop window, it conveyed something of the power of the music it housed and quickly became the gold standard for what was then beginning to be called progressive rock.

Touring America, being 'coptered into shows at Palm Beach and blasting the brains out of the assembled freaks and hippies packed into the Fillmores East and West, it seemed like nothing could stop King Crimson's remarkable rise from abject obscurity to the point where rock royalty such as The Who's Pete Townshend decreed their debut album "an uncanny masterpiece". The young usurpers really had marched up and stolen the crown. Yet out on the road, in a car somewhere near California's Big Sur, Ian McDonald, and Michael Giles announced their intention to quit at the end of the American trip. The quintet's dazzling, meteoric career from start to finish had lasted a magical 335 days before burning itself out.


The core of King Crimson: Robert Fripp in 1972

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

In January 1970, Greg Lake accepted Keith Emerson's offer to form a new group and King Crimson began to look like progressive rock's most celebrated 'one-hit wonder', such was the impact and importance of that debut. The momentum accompanying the group in that first year was now replaced by chaos and uncertainty as Fripp and Sinfield, the only survivors from the original lineup, navigated from one recording to another with an ever-changing cast list of guest players and a determination not to let Crimson collapse. Recorded in the spring of 1970, *In The Wake Of Poseidon* sought to replicate the structural dynamic of its storied predecessor, with "Pictures Of A City"'s crushing guitar riffs and staccato explosions aping "21st Century Schizoid Man"'s stark brutality. What was different, and markedly so, was the atonal spattering of Keith Tippett's acoustic piano on the catchy, avant-pop "Cat Food". An incongruous single, it gained a lip-synching Crimson their only appearance ever on BBC TV's *Top Of The Pops*. A rising star of the British jazz scene and the leader of his own small (and large-scale) ensembles, Keith Tippett's anarchic presence would be keenly felt on *Lizard*, the second of two contrasting albums made in 1970.

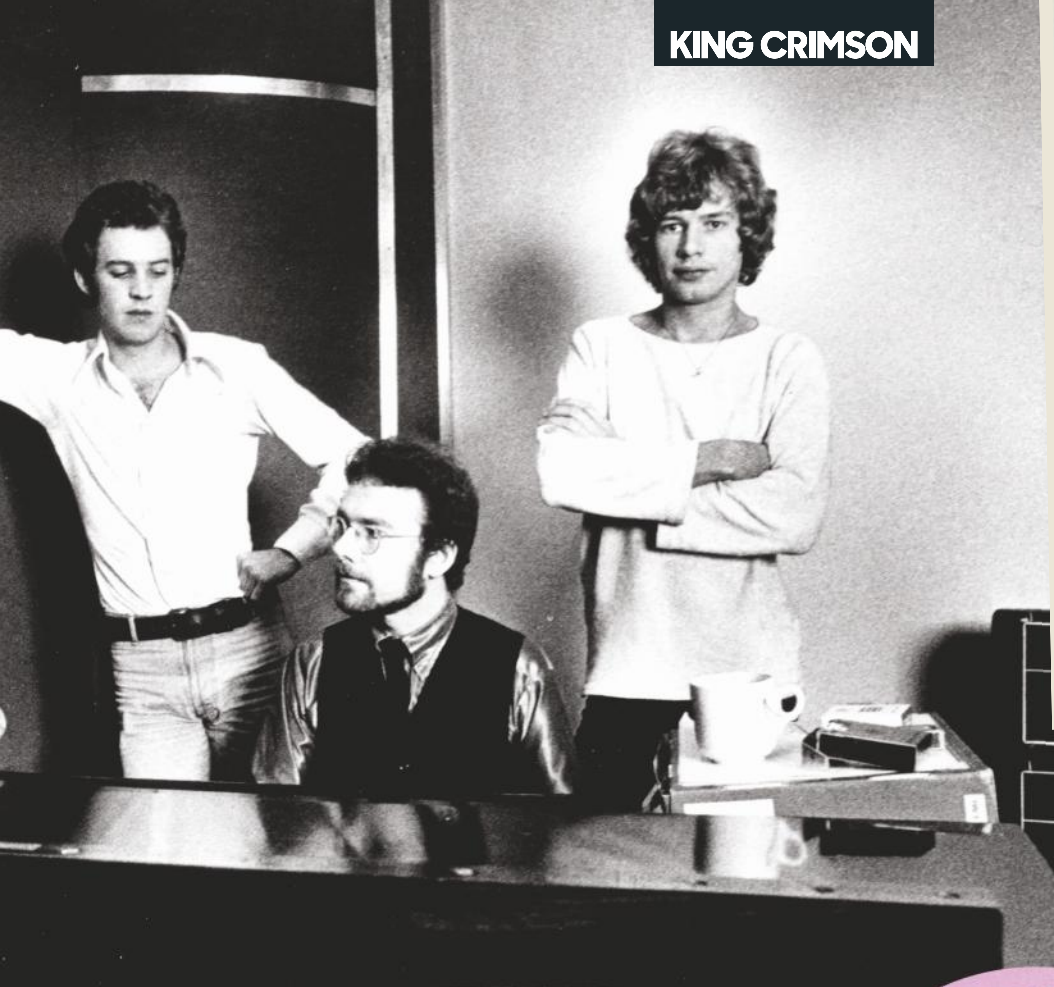
The momentum accompanying the group in that first year was now replaced by chaos and uncertainty

With another shift in core personnel and more guests, including Yes vocalist Jon Anderson, *Lizard* was the first King Crimson album with music solely composed by Fripp. Its combustible mix of sharp-cornered jazz-rock riffing intersecting with classical-style arrangements, surging Mellotron swells and the guitarist's precision-guided laser-beam soloing occupying a sprawling side-long suite, it's the sound of King Crimson finally getting out from under the shadow of 1969. Bold and different it may have been, but it was also an augury of yet more trouble, with the new iteration falling apart in rehearsals. Fripp and Sinfield kept the name alive in the studio, but as far as finding a working group capable of getting out on the road, they were back to square one. It also marked a significant deterioration between Sinfield and Fripp, with the latter coming to detest Sinfield's lyrics. A new incarnation of King Crimson made its live debut in April 1971 in Germany after more than four months of auditioning various hopefuls. These included a young Bryan Ferry, then looking for a pre-Roxy Music breakthrough into the music industry.

(l-r) John Wetton, David Cross, Robert Fripp and Bill Bruford in the *Larks' Tongues/Starless*-era Crimson, 1974

Released in December 1971, the next album *Islands* offered a complete contrast to *Lizard*'s brow-furrowing density, but displayed a musical compass prone to spin every which way. It contained a wistful composition for chamber ensemble conducted by Fripp, a windswept ballad for a title track, a skewed blues with misogynistic lyrics and an operatic soprano crooning against a sunny laid-back groove. However, another instrumental, "Sailor's Tale", revolving around Fripp's frenetic, chordal solo, pointed toward a metal-edged alternative future. As history repeated itself once again, and with Sinfield already sacked, the *Islands* lineup finally broke up at the end of an American tour in the spring of 1972. Undaunted, Fripp nabbed Family bassist – and old friend – John Wetton and Yes drummer and long-term Crimson fan Bill Bruford, who had just finished Yes's *Close To The Edge*. Along with violinist David Cross, completing the lineup was percussionist Jamie Muir, whose work on the UK's free-jazz scene added a playfully subversive dimension to the rocky formality of 1973's *Larks' Tongues In Aspic*.

Though a powerful statement in its own right, with some of the strongest material



KC, 1980s: (l-r) Fripp, Bruford, Belew, Tony Levin

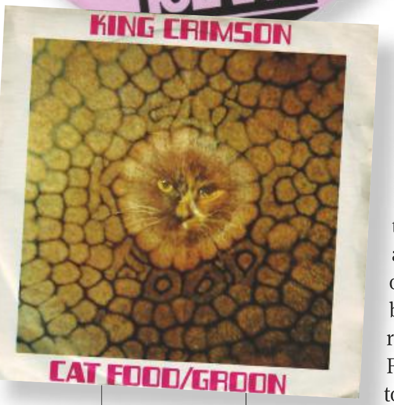
since Crimson's original formation, nobody in the band thought it adequately captured the force they conjured on stage. In their earliest performances in the winter of '72, Muir's catalysing influence saw Crimson integrating lengthy improvisations amid composed sections. Even after Muir's abrupt departure on the eve of another UK and European tour to join a Tibetan monastery, such was the confidence of the remaining quartet that the practice continued, developing to a point where it was impossible for punters to tell what was improvised and what wasn't. The title track of 1974's *Starless And Bible Black*, and from it pieces including "We'll Let You Know" and "Trio", all culled from live performances but with any crowd sounds skilfully removed, posited an almost telepathic means of sniffing out vivid atmospheres, creating gravity-defying rhythms, razor-sharp interactions that could be opaque and mysterious one minute and bone-crunchingly direct and rocking out in-your-face the next. These sonic explorations, which owed as much to contemporary classical experimentation as they did rock or jazz, were forged into a compelling hybrid that placed Crimson outside the programmatic conceptual-orientated epics of their contemporaries.

Focusing all their efforts on working in the USA during most of 1974, where they played their final date at a packed Central Park in New York, Fripp in particular was exhausted and looking to bail out. Emotionally and spiritually bruised and battered after six years of steering more than 20 musicians across seven intensely detailed studio albums, Fripp called time on Crimson after making the cathartic '70s swansong *Red*.

Released in the autumn of '74 after the band's dissolution, it possesses a pleasing symmetry, bringing everything full circle with KC co-founder Ian McDonald back as a guest player, along with a returning Mel Collins whose tender sax graced the gorgeously mournful "Starless". Moving from an aching ballad to the glowering tension and release of its screaming one-note guitar solo, it dramatically closes the door on the turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s. *Red*'s brilliance rivals Crimson's impressive '60s debut.

Just as *In The Court Of The Crimson King* had set the bar and inspired countless bands at the time of its release and in subsequent years, so too *Red* changed the game for yet another generation of players. Between the span of Crimson's releases, admirers as diverse as Uriah Heep's Mick Box, Herbie Hancock, Joe Strummer, Henry Rollins, Kurt Cobain, Kate Bush, Talk Talk's Mark Hollis, Tool's Adam Jones, St Vincent's Annie Clarke, Hedvig Mollestad and even Kanye West, who sampled "21st Century Schizoid Man", have all been drawn to the curious, eclectic energies and directions the band in its various incarnations vigorously and fearlessly explored.

THE COURT OF THE
CRIMSON KING (Part One)
(McDonald/Sinfield)
KING CRIMSON
Produced by King Crimson for E.G. Productions
(from ILPS-9111 In The Court Of The Crimson King)
WIP-6071
WIPX.1043
℗ 1969
E.G. Music
ISLAND

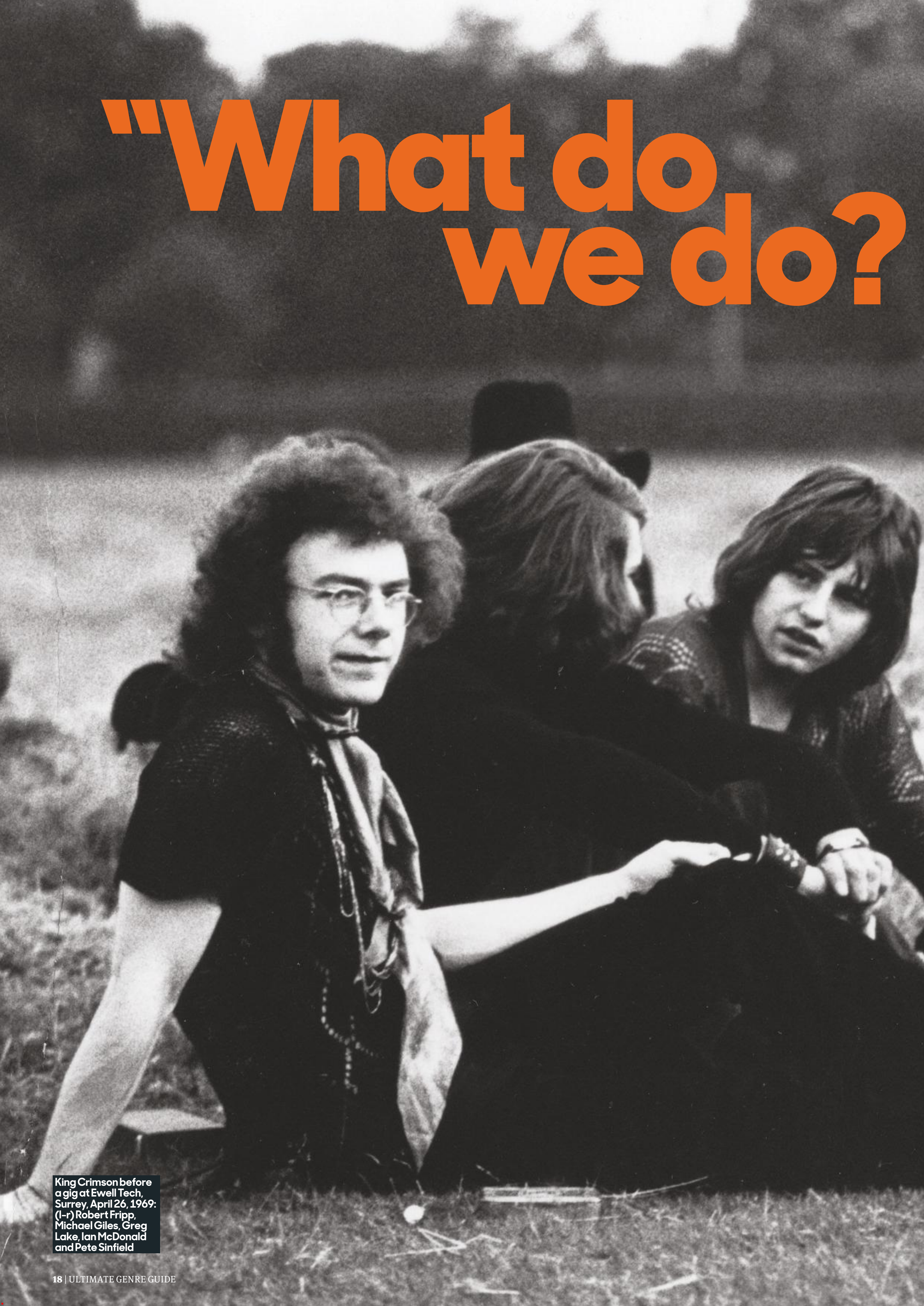


Disciplined: (above right, l-r) Fripp, Bruford, Adrian Belew and Tony Levin in Tokyo, 1981

While King Crimson's personnel would stabilise during the 1980s, and expand and contract as Fripp saw fit during the '90s and '00s, it seemed that after 2003's *The Power To Believe*, the 13th and last Crimson studio release to date, the ensuing silence suggested that King Crimson had finally abdicated. Yet after a long absence, Fripp's announcement that a radically overhauled and expanded seven-piece King Crimson, boasting three drummers, would return to the stage in 2014 took fans, and indeed some members of the band itself, entirely by surprise. With material reimagined and redefined, Fripp's setlist going forward to their 50th-anniversary celebrations in 2019 draws heavily on that tranche of songs such as "Starless" that had lain unplayed for well over four decades. In some cases – 1969's "Moonchild", "In The Court Of The Crimson King" complete with its apocalyptic coda, substantial portions of the gnarly *Lizard* suite – they were being performed live for the very first time. Appearing at the Rock In Rio festival before 100,000 people and an estimated live television audience of several million, King Crimson's capacity to surprise, shock and awe remains undiminished. ●

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

"What do we do?



King Crimson before a gig at Ewell Tech, Surrey, April 26, 1969: (l-r) Robert Fripp, Michael Giles, Greg Lake, Ian McDonald and Pete Sinfield

Stop pushing ahead?"

A new group called **KING CRIMSON** becomes a sensation in the UK underground, but a US tour nearly breaks them. "I hope this doesn't sound pretentious," says Michael Giles, "but another group could come along and simplify what we play and they would be away. There are strong feelings in the band to get into more involved music."

WILLIE CHRISTIE

MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 18, 1969

Melody Maker
NEW HOLLIES-HEAVY HIT!
SAM AND DAVE DATES

AT the beginning of this year a new group arrived on the London club scene. None of its members were known from past exploits with other bands but within a few months they were being talked about as THE group in this year of the supergroups.

Pete Townshend has described their first album, *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, as an "uncanny masterpiece". They are Ian McDonald, Pete Sinfield, Bob Fripp, Greg Lake and Mike Giles, collectively known as King Crimson.

"We started rehearsing in January although the people were together in the November before getting the equipment together," said Ian on his first visit to the *MM* with Pete Sinfield.

"I wasn't in a particular band, I was looking for the right one. Bob, who plays guitar, and Mike, the drummer, were in a band together which wasn't a success and which nobody talks about. Greg was in a group called the Gods.

"I joined Bob and Mike and I'd known Pete for about a year as we started writing songs together, which we still do. I'd done various things and been in an army band for five years. Greg plays guitar and looks after the vocals. I play flute, sax, clarinet, Mellotron and any other instrument I can get my hands on."

Pete Sinfield looks after King Crimson's light show, an important part of their act, which aims at total involvement.

"Originally I was just writing the words for some of the songs when I thought we should have some lights. Just pure lighting, as the lights in some of the clubs were so bad.

Then I got a bit more involved in it and tried to get some intensity and feel into it. The first light show I had only cost £40 but I'm having one for £500 by an electronic wizard."

Ian McDonald continued the King Crimson story: "We rehearsed for two months and then did the opening gig at the Speakeasy and the Lyceum, which was disastrous. But we got to the business end of the thing very quickly and we signed with Atlantic although Mercury made a bigger offer.

"When we started nobody knew what was going to happen. We just knew it had to be good and it had to be something different. There are all sorts of influences. Bob [*Fripp*] brings in a lot of classical things as he listens to Bartók, Mike brings in a lot of jazz, Greg brings in a lot of heavy things and I weave my way around the lot."

The group shortly tour America, where they hope they will be able to write a lot of new material for a new album, which they hope to release on their return.

In nine months King Crimson have emerged, without the normal showbusiness hype, as one of the biggest talents. The next nine months should see the development of their true potential. ***ROYSTON ELDRIDGE***

NME NOVEMBER 8, 1969

New Musical Express
RINGO SURPRISE
TRACY
LULU
"Oh Me Oh My"

FASHIONS are pleasant but can be dangerously short-lived. In roaring out from nowhere in a matter of half a dozen months to become the fashionable Underground attraction of the day, King Crimson have a problem.

"It's very worrying," agreed drummer Mike Giles, speaking from their manager's Kensington mews house before the group left for its debut tour of America. "But I cannot see what on earth we can do about it. How much are we responsible for what's happened? We started off doing our thing and after that it was not up to us at all. People either go to see you or they don't. If they do and word gets passed around, there must be some value behind the fashion."

The success of King Crimson's first album, *In The Court Of The Crimson King* – in at No 14 in this week's *NME* chart – really has been staggering, too staggering for some – notably the groups who had been slogging round the circuit only to discover King Crimson racing past them to become the biggest potential success the Underground has produced this year. So while the majority of critics, underground connoisseurs and musicians have been showering lavish praise in their direction – "original", "sensational", "the new Beatles" – there has also existed a small but vociferous band of detractors.

"I think we have had our success a little too fast for some of the people who've been trying to make it for ages," says Mike Giles. But although the band could be called an overnight success, its members certainly couldn't. Giles, a 27-year-old who speaks with deliberation and much forethought, has been playing drums for 12 years, first in Bournemouth alongside people like Zoot Money, Peddler Roy Phillips and Shadow John Rostill and then in London from 1967. Session work and various unsuccessful groups came before he formed Giles, Giles & Fripp with Robert Fripp.

Fripp himself, King Crimson's lead guitarist, had spent three somewhat soul-destroying years playing in a resident hotel band, backing cabaret artists like Bob Monkhouse and Norman Vaughan before the "forgettable" group with Mike Giles, about which they don't like to talk.

Ian McDonald, 23 and on sax, clarinet, flute and Mellotron for King Crimson, is a former army bandsman who has played in all kinds of outfits from classical orchestras to wind ensembles.

Former draughtsman and member of the Gods, where he switched from lead to bass guitar, Greg Lake is now the lead vocalist, while fifth member Pete Sinfield doesn't actually play in the group but writes lyrics and operates the famed King Crimson light show.

The group came together in January this year; first Robert and Mike, closely followed by Ian and then Greg. Pete, a one-time computer executive, drifted in later: "I thought how bad the lights were in some clubs and I said I would build them some to give colour on stage. At the beginning I was just changing the lighting for each song, but eventually I started 'playing' the lights with the music."

All five brought different influences. Says Mike Giles: "You have got jazz from me, classics from Bob, Beatles and Dylan from Pete and Ian and heavy rock music from Greg. But the divisions aren't really that satisfactory because we all like jazz, we all like Beatles and Dylan etcetera..."

The group rehearsed for three months in a room beneath a café in London's Fulham Palace Road and made its first public appearance in April. "There was a very hard core of people who gave us support early on," said Mike Giles. "They spread the good word for us around the clubs and when we went out and did our first gigs we found a lot of people already knew about us."

Their biggest stroke of luck was a booking on The Rolling Stones' Hyde Park extravaganza. It is no meagre tribute that more than a quarter of a million Stones fans who had sat for hours on the hard ground raised howls of delight and surprise for the aggressive music of King Crimson.

Like many of their Underground contemporaries, the group has a loathing of 'hype', although Pete and Mike say it has been somewhat exaggerated. "It was because everybody had been messed around by managers and agents," explained Pete. "Particularly Bob, Mike and Greg, who have been through every bad scene in the pop machine."

And Mike's definition of 'hype': "Helping oneself without helping others at the same time. Our sort of protest about 'hype' is aimed at the 'hypers', the ones who are still doing it."

"What does the word pretentious mean to you?" asked Pete suddenly.

"MOST PEOPLE ARE NOT QUITE SURE WHAT TO MAKE OF US. WE MAY BE AHEAD OF OUR TIME"
PETE SINFIELD

Schizoid men: King Crimson in 1969 – (l-r) Fripp, Sinfield, Giles and Lake

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

KHILL ENTERPRISES

Crimson's biggest stroke of luck: entertaining the Stones faithful at the free Hyde Park concert, 5 July 1969

"Pretending to be something you're not," I replied.

"Because we've been called pretentious," Pete continued, "and I can't see it.

"I think most people are not quite sure what to make of us actually. Audiences aren't quite sure which bits they should applaud. We may be a little bit ahead of our time. They can see there is something worthwhile but they are not sure what."

Mike: "What do we do? Stop pushing ahead, cash in on what is simple for people to understand, or go by our own standards? I hope this doesn't sound pretentious but another group could come along and simplify what we play and they would be away.

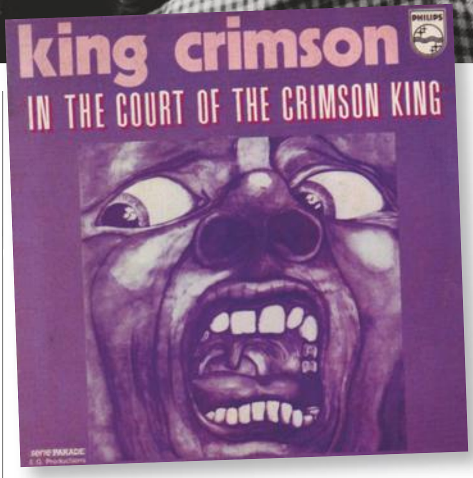
"There are strong feelings in the band to get into more involved music. If we did this straight away I don't think we would have an audience for it. Nevertheless, we enjoy what we do at the moment and believe in it, and it earns us enough money to set up the machinery to get into the music we want to in time."

The group made its debut album three times: more through their own inability to be their own producers than for musical reasons.

Pete: "We were trying so hard. And we were rushed at the end to get it finished. It could have been much better."

Mike: "It could have been 50 per cent better. When we started we were going to be a recording group more than a live group and it appears to have turned out the other way.

"There is a definite lack of feel on the album in some places and only about 30 per cent of the sound everybody wanted. What is missing is the presence, the harshness, the attack. We ideally need a sixth member of the band in the shape of a producer."


king crimson
IN THE COURT OF THE CRIMSON KING
PHILIPS

As is so often the case when a group makes its breakthrough, King Crimson is now in America. They left last week for a two-month tour, complete with three tons of equipment, including Pete Sinfield's lights. "It will cost a fortune to send," said Mike. ***NICK LOGAN***

MELODY MAKER NOVEMBER 15,1969

Melody Maker
COLOUR COMES TO POP
48
JOHN and YOKO'S WEDDING ALBUM ISSUED

"AMERICA is even more American than we had expected," said King Crimson's Ian McDonald on the phone from Chicago. "For example, they have a TV programme instead of our *Epilogue* called *Sermonette* – unbelievable!"

Crimson are on their first trip to the States and will be away for eight weeks during which they play a string of major dates, including a Miami concert with The Rolling Stones for which they are being flown by helicopter.

"The album is out here now and seems to be getting plays on all the New York stations," reported Ian. "Actually we were surprised to find that people knew us when we arrived. This was partly due to people reading about us in *MM* and we have also had bits in the underground papers here.

"Among the people we have worked with so far is Al Kooper, who was disappointing. He was backed by a new group, a second-rate soul band. We also worked with Om, a very nice heavy rock band, and Steve Miller. Audiences here still seem to favour English groups – perhaps because they seem to project more than the Americans. One unexpected problem – the power seems rather peculiar over here and I've been having trouble with the Mellotron. Every time the lights go down it goes out of tune. Audiences seem pretty much the same as in England but we have re-paced our show so that it builds more to a climax."

Ian said there was a possibility of the group recording a single for Atlantic during the tour. ***BOB DAWBARN***

NME NOVEMBER 29,1969

New Musical Express
REGGAE SECRETS
TREMELOES NEW HOMES
Robin Gibb
One Million Years

THE number of British bands zig-zagging lucratively across the American continent rises monthly. Fleetwood Mac, Nice, Jethro Tull, Led Zeppelin, Fat Mattress and, of course, The Rolling Stones were just a part of the heavy British contingent on the US trail when King Crimson drummer Mike Giles phoned the *NME* from a New York hotel last week.

In fact, resident at the same hotel at the same time were Joe Cocker, Spooky Tooth and The Liverpool Scene. But for all our successful exports – in King Crimson's experience – being new and British presents no easy access to fame or instant acclaim.

"We thought there might be a bit more appreciation because we were English, but ➢

TRINITY MIRROR/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

there wasn't," said Mike. "We have had to work extremely hard and had to change round our equipment and bits of our act. We've moved Greg [*the vocalist*] from the side of the stage to the middle, for instance.

"There have been no sort of instant reactions. On the first night in Boston there was just a ripple of reaction from the audience. It was terrible. So we had to work really hard the next few nights and on about the third we were beginning to get people with us.

"On the whole I think we have found audiences more reserved than in England, but that may be because we are unknown and they know nothing of our birth. The scene itself is very similar to that in England. Reputations grow more by word of mouth. If somebody likes you they pass it on to someone else."

Considering it was 5.30 in the morning New York time, Mike sounded bright and cheerful as he consulted his diary for interesting things to pass on – but he admitted that in the first few weeks morale had sunk a little low.

"Well maybe not low, but it wasn't that good. It is improving now though. Mainly it was down to the fact that we were having to hang around for three or four days of each week with nothing to do. But after all the bad luck, equipment breaking down, venues burning down and morale not too good, things are looking up.

"We've yet to do the places that really count and we're looking forward to them... like the Fillmore West, the Stones concert in Miami, Los Angeles Whiskey. We're with Fleetwood Mac at the Fillmore. When we have done these places, if we are worth knowing about then we will be known. If we are not, we won't.

"I think we are still learning," Mike replied when I asked what the tour had taught the band. "It will probably take three trips to find out what the answers are, but we have got as far as being able to see the light."

Many groups find that the variable luck, prolonged travelling and inevitable periods of boredom have their compensation in serving to unite a band. "Yes, that is so," affirmed Mike. "We've found that it is knitting us together but we've yet to experience the results of it."

Mike consulted his diary to tell me that after King Crimson's gig at Chicago Kinetic playground with Iron Butterfly, the hall was burnt down during the night – by gangsters, according to reports.

"Iron Butterfly had their equipment completely burnt out," said Mike. "Ours wasn't too bad but we couldn't use it for a couple of days because of the water in it. We had to cancel our second gig there."

On a brighter note, the group was pleased to find acceptance for their free-form specialities. "We didn't intend to use any," said Mike, "but we tried them on Saturday and they went down extremely well.

"One of the nicest jobs we did was last week in Detroit," he went on. "We played with The Band, who were excellent. They are perhaps the best group we've seen: a very together unit."

The Band apart, Mike said they had been disappointed with most of the American acts they'd seen. "Most haven't impressed us, like Iron Butterfly. Jefferson Airplane have an excellent light show but nothing really strong musically. We saw the Steve Miller Band, who are now down to a trio, and they were a disappointment as well. We also worked with Al Kooper in Boston and weren't impressed with him either – although he's a nice chap."

The group haven't had many chances to talk to young Americans but, says Mike, "the Underground seems to be pretty strong, mainly as a gathering point for young people.

"They are much more militant here about police and social problems because they are affected more. There's also a lot of hostility towards people with long hair. There was a man in a supermarket making strong comments about us, but we've tried to steer clear of that sort of thing to avoid trouble."

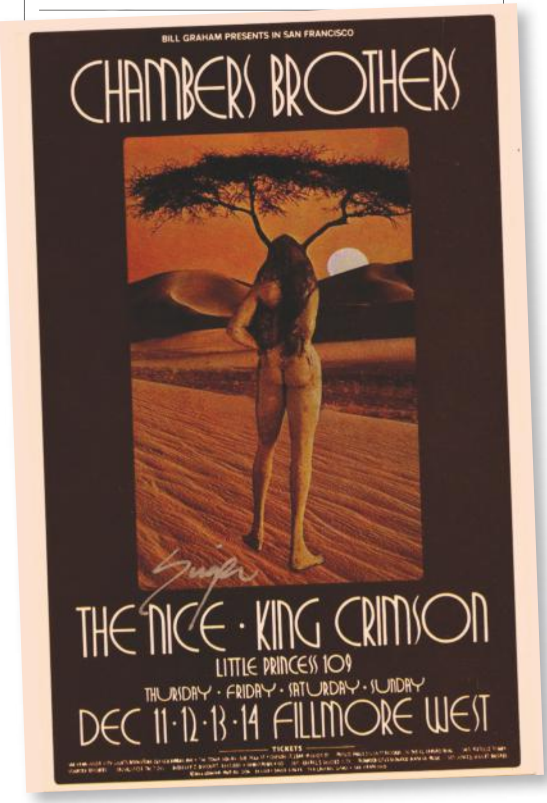
In The Court Of The Crimson King, which is at 10 in this week's *NME* LP Chart, had been on release just five days when we spoke. "We've had a fair amount of FM radio," said Mike, "and a few people in the business spreading the word and doing nice things."

On their fifth week of the tour with four to go, the group is spending spare time writing material for the second album, and have most of the ideas. They plan to record during February and March. "It will be different from the first," offered Mike, "and better."

After a holiday over Christmas the group then embarks on a series of major concerts.

"We hope to do some clubs as well," said Mike. "I don't think it would be fair to some of the audiences who cannot get to concerts – and also there are some nice clubs. But mainly it will be concerts because it's not only better for us but for the audience as well." ***NICK LOGAN***

> **"IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T LIKE SOFT THINGS, BUT I TEND TO FALL MORE FOR EXTREMES IN MUSIC"**
>
> **ROBERT FRIPP**


BILL GRAHAM PRESENTS IN SAN FRANCISCO
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TICKETS

MELODY MAKER DECEMBER 20, 1969

Melody Maker

WRITES Mike Giles to MM from the USA: Good day to one and all from a very homesick scribe on behalf of the Great Crimso, otherwise known as KC, Crimso The Great or even King Crimson.

Since we last reported back to *MM*, we have played Detroit, New York and the Palm Beach Festival. At Detroit's East Town Theatre we played with The Band, who were excellent. Their songs, arrangements and performance were all very together and we got the impression that they were very sympathetic to each other's musical attitudes and played to each other, thus creating a complete band to listen to. There were, however, flaws in their presentation although it didn't seem to matter.

The East Town Theatre was fairly well organised and is a large old building complete with seats, food and drink for the groups, fair dressing rooms and a good audience. We did get the feeling, though, that our music was so different from their usual diet that they will have to hear us again live and on record before they can really get into it. But we were well received.

We also played another Detroit theatre, the Grande, with Jefferson Airplane. We were not inspired by either.

Then on to New York with many days waiting to play at Fillmore East with Joe Cocker and Fleetwood Mac. We did Friday and Saturday, two shows a night. Everyone must have heard about the Fillmore so all I can say is that it is the best place we have ever played. Their stage management, light show, facilities and organisation are magnificent.

Joe Cocker was very good and he has a big name over here. The only other groups that have been worth commenting on are Nice, and, particularly, The Flock, who are really the only band we have seen to date that are getting together – looking into the future with respect for the past.

We haven't played any colleges since Vermont, mainly because we need the publicity of playing the major venues with name groups. We have heard that our LP is "bubbling under" the Top 100 over here and is receiving good reaction everywhere so it is just a question of time now, I hope, before it enters the chart.

We hope to play colleges next time round after having done the few major venues which include Detroit, Chicago, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and San Francisco. These are about the only places where comparatively unknown groups like ourselves can get their music across in the best way with good conditions.

On the last night at the Fillmore, Julie Driscoll turned up and pleased us by liking our music. She also told us about her future plans to work with Keith Tippett, which promises to be good.

We received standing ovations on both the Friday and Saturday at the Palm Beach Festival with the Stones. We were flown into the swamped festival site by helicopter. The festival is so large that, as always, it becomes disorganised.

The continuous rain has made the swamp on which it was held into a mud patch – not to mention the insects and snakes which bite, and also the 4,000 Guardsmen who stood by "in case of trouble". The 50,000 people who turned up were determined not to let anything upset them and were beautiful in showing America how to peacefully enjoy music under the most difficult conditions.

Tomorrow we fly to Los Angeles for five days at the Whiskey A Go Go and then to San Francisco for three days at the Fillmore West. Then home via New York to England's green and pleasant land.

We've been writing new material for the next LP, which includes rock'n'roll songs and love songs, and we are also toying with the idea of writing a modern symphony to be played by the leaders in modern musical attitudes. It would probably need about 12 musicians that we particularly admire and would be written for a concert and, possibly, an LP.

It's only an idea at the moment, born from the unsuccessful super-groups and the unsuccessful attempts at combining different forms of music – jazz and classics, rock and classics, rock and jazz – most of which failed miserably in the past.

We feel – or at least I do – that instead of trying to put unlikely musical attitudes together in the hope of something happening, we should bring together musicians who already have a broad and respectful attitude in their playing so that we can hear music like we've never heard before.

Ex-members Greg Lake and Mike Giles join Fripp for a mimed rendition of "Cat Food" on *Top Of The Pops*, March 25, 1970

NME JANUARY 24,1970

New Musical Express

232 POLL RESULTS

24 PAGE SUPER ISSUE

TRACY

THE seemingly lemming-like mania for self-destruction among our established groups has left us all a little blasé. Who can still express surprise these days when the groups we've grown up with (or in spite of) start voluntarily taking themselves apart?

On the other hand, when it happens to a band like King Crimson with all before them and not even six months into their recording life one does begin to wonder where it will all end.

Crimso, as it's affectionately known, joined the group casualty list as the new year opened with the severance of its right arm and leg in the forms of Ian McDonald and Mike Giles.

The group's remains, Bob Fripp, Greg Lake and Pete Sinfield, have meanwhile gone back – literally – to square one.

With two so-far-unnamed replacements, the new King Crimson started rehearsing last week in the same room beneath a seedy West London cafe that the old King Crimson started from... exactly one year ago.

Ian McDonald and Bob Fripp, demonstrating the amicability of the parting better than a carefully phrased handout could, met the *NME* last week to explain both sides of the split.

"The situation," started Ian, "was that I was playing music I enjoyed but I wanted to play music that was more personal to me. I was unable to do that with King Crimson.

"The group has a very broad mixture of music but the average feel of the songs I was not happy with. It is not happy music. And I want to make music that says good things instead of evil things.

"The music will be more varied. I doubt if there will be much paranoia or aggression. There will be less frustration."

"Talk To The Wind", from the King Crimson album, is a signpost towards Ian's musical leanings but, he adds, "I wrote that about two years ago and it didn't really come off on the LP.

"Mike had his own ideas but we are enough together to be able to work with each other."

Their dissatisfaction with Crimso's music, said Ian, came to a head during the group's seven-week US tour. They say that America either brings a group together or takes it apart, and in the case of King Crimson it appears to have done both.

"It was a fantastic coincidence really," continued Ian. "Mike and I were both going through the same scenes without knowing it. America brought the group together and we had more time to talk. There was a lot of sitting around in planes and hotel rooms and a lot of time to think.

"It wasn't an impulsive decision. This had been building up since the group began. None of us saw King Crimson as an end product."

Bob nodded his agreement. "It was the right thing at the time and I enjoyed doing it."

Ian's flute, sax, clarinet and Mellotron and Mike's drums actually ceased to be a part of King Crimson when the group played its last US date at the Fillmore West before returning home on December 16.

Both have been writing material and plan to go into a studio together "fairly soon". They have no plans to form a set group – "Just us two and anyone else who might like to play" – and the same goes for live appearances, although none have been fixed.

"I suppose it is a gamble," concluded Ian, "but I have sufficient faith in the music."

So what then of King Crimson? Despite Ian and Mike's major contributions as both writers and musicians, the blow is not a mortal one. Bob Fripp is more than anyone else the head of King Crimson, as far as the music is concerned, and he remains. Ian and Mike acknowledged this fact when they decided to split.

Says Bob: "During the drive up the West Coast I asked them if they would rather I left and they said: 'No. Crimso is more you than us.'

"It doesn't mean that I don't like soft things but I tend to fall more for extremes in music and in the same way as Ian feels free I feel free too.

"The brakes are off. It was obvious to me where King Crimson should have gone. To Ian and Mike it should have gone a different way. At the same time I didn't think it was necessarily right that it should go in the direction I wanted and that is why I asked them if I should leave."

After we spoke, Bob left to start rehearsals with the new band, which includes a drummer who came to Pete Sinfleld in a dream. "He's been living in the country near Glastonbury for a year after getting fed up with crummy bands," volunteered Bob.

They'll stay at rehearsing for three months, then go back on the road in April with a five-week recording stint starting in May. The new album will include "Mars", a Pete Sinfield rock'n'roller called "Catfood" and a Fripp song in the "Schizoid" vein about New York called "Pictures Of A City."

A single will also be released during the three months' rehearsals to compensate for the long gap between albums.

And the new music? "One of the reasons for the long rehearsals is to allow the personalities of the new men to come out in the music.

"I have a feeling it will go to extremes – and that will be a gas." ● ***NICK LOGAN***

TONY GALE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER

A supergroup faithful to their heritage expand into a keyboard-butchering behemoth. *By Nick Hasted*

CIRCUMSTANCES made ELP pantomime prog villains in the summer of 1977, when they were joined by an orchestra in Montreal's snowbound Olympic stadium in the video for "Fanfare For The Common Man", a No 2 UK hit whose release was symbolically bracketed by the Pistols' "God Save the Queen" and "Pretty Vacant". But it wasn't punk that did ELP in – they were uniquely despised from the start.

They were the definitive supergroup, uniting The Nice's showman keyboardist Keith Emerson, King Crimson's bassist-singer Greg Lake and the less storied 20-year-old drummer Carl Palmer (late of Atomic Rooster). They were viewed as out-of-touch, dues-dodging dilettantes in the hippie press long before the punk rock weeklies put the boot in.

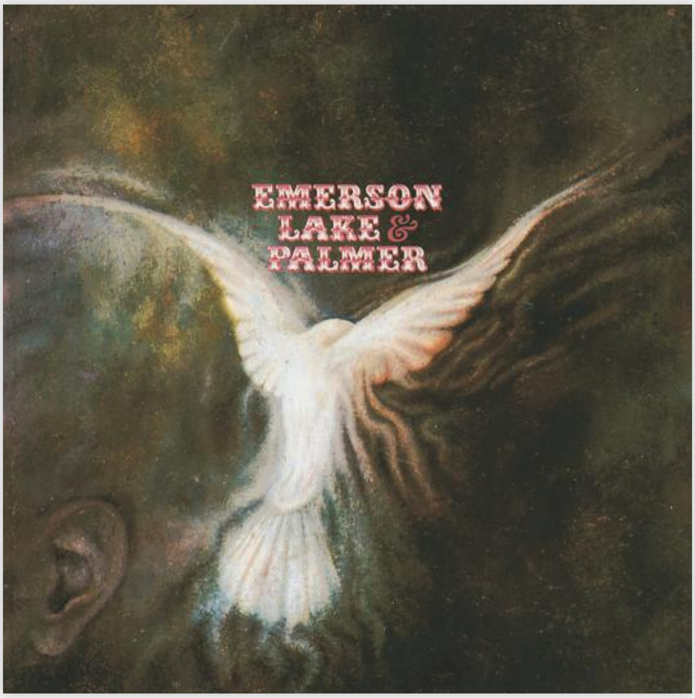
ELP were also deliberately resistant to being a rock band at all. Feeling the blues-rock field was played out, their stated intention when they began in 1970 was to abandon the black American motherlode which had so entranced the previous decade's Surrey delta prodigies. "We wanted to... stick to our heritage," Emerson recalled to journalist Phil Harrison. "We're white, we're European, we didn't want to pretend to be something that we're not."

This paralleled the '70s declaration of cultural independence by Scandinavian jazz musicians such as Jan Garbarek, who drew on his ethereal native folk music rather than stiffly replicate jazz's socially loaded black source. In a rock culture reliant on authenticity signified by blues suffering and excitement, it left ELP on a lonely limb. Even Lake came to doubt their stubborn stand.

"I will always have a certain amount of regret somewhere deep down inside," he confessed in his autobiography *Lucky Man*, "particularly as a singer, at not being able to embrace American soul, blues and country music... as much as I would have liked."

In truth, Lake had reacted to rock'n'roll's arrival as deliriously as his future rock peers. Putting it to one side with ELP was both strategic, and a statement of intent. "Just to play some rock'n'roll would have been very enjoyable," he told *Sounds*, "but not serious enough for us to take on as a band." It was ELP's keyboardist who was truly indifferent to rock. While young Reg Dwight was having his suburban Middlesex horizons blown wide open by Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard, over in the Sussex coastal backwater of Worthing, they left Emerson cold, in a classical and jazz-ruled boyhood.

ELP were prog's perfect template in the way they abandoned every expectation embedded in 12-bar blues, the epochal fission of '50s rock'n'roll, and the resistant spirit the Dylan-led folk revival had also fused into rock's DNA. Even if, as Emerson ➢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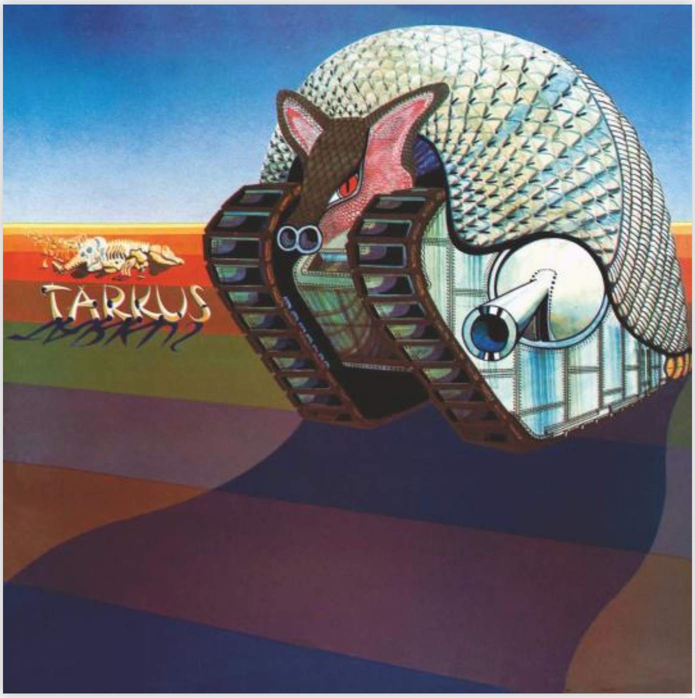

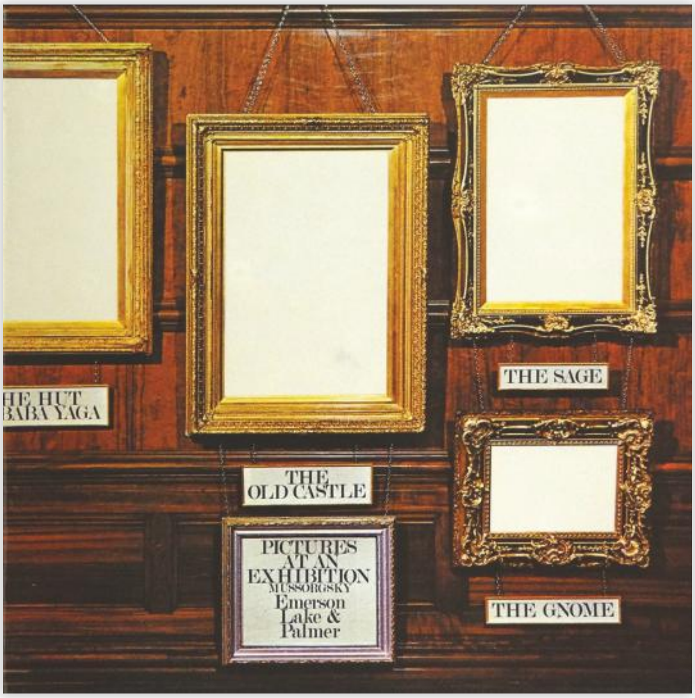
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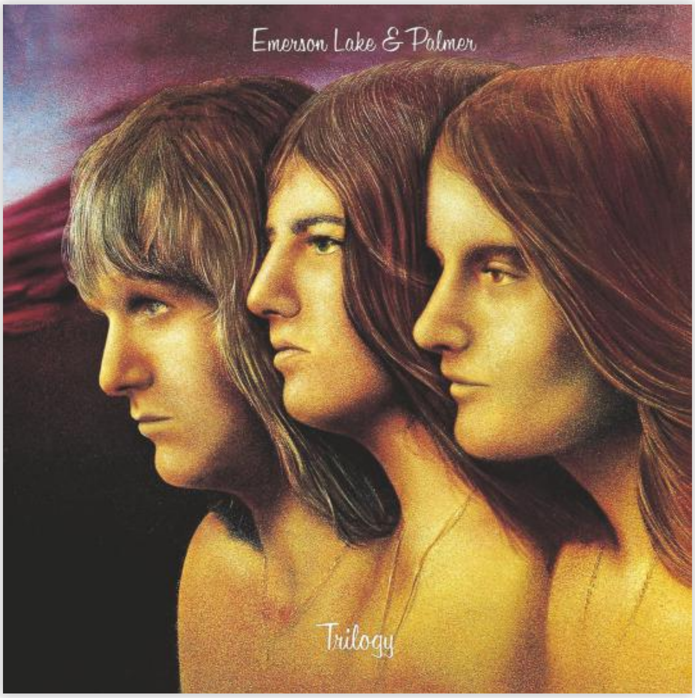
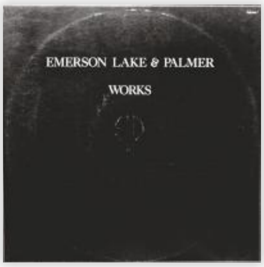
BABA YAGA
THE SAGE
THE OLD CASTLE
PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION MUSSORGSKY Emerson Lake & Palmer
THE GNOME


Emerson Lake & Palmer
Trilogy

Welcome back, my friends to the show that never ends – Ladies and Gentlemen
Emerson Lake & Palmer


EMERSON LAKE & PALMER
WORKS

EMERSON LAKE & PALMER
WORKS

EMERSON LAKE & PALMER
LOVE BEACH

EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER
ISLAND, 1970
7/10

TARKUS
ISLAND, 1971
6/10

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION
ISLAND, 1971
8/10

TRILOGY
ISLAND, 1972
6/10

BRAIN SALAD SURGERY
MANTICORE, 1973
6/10

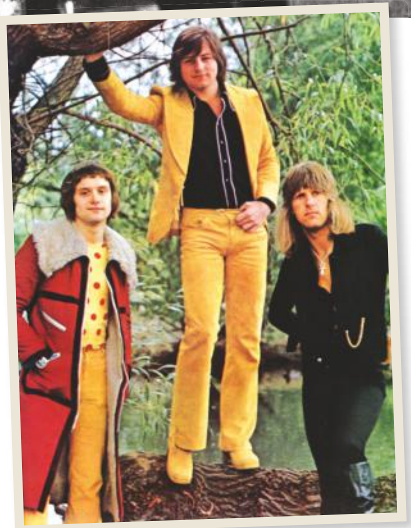
WELCOME BACK, MY FRIENDS TO THE SHOW THAT NEVER ENDS - LADIES AND GENTLEMEN
MANTICORE, 1974
5/10

WORKS
ATLANTIC, 1977
6/10

WORKS VOLUME 2
ATLANTIC, 1977
6/10

LOVE BEACH
ATLANTIC, 1978
4/10

Getting stuck in: Hammond stabber Keith Emerson on stage, early '70s



Out on a limb: (l-r) Carl Palmer, Greg Lake and Keith Emerson, 1972

acknowledged, substituting classical motifs made their compositions still more backward-looking: “progressive rock with a lot of regard for the past”.

This sounded dispassionate at the time, and the impression in the band's increasingly gun-shy interactions with the '70s rock press is of distant technocrats, more concerned with their elephantine stage shows' logistics than soulful art. “Their music is mechanical and does not have a feel to it like most rock'n'roll,” even their engineer Eddie Offord blithely told *Melody Maker*.

Yet this badly underestimates their emotional commitment. Emerson's earliest, deeply comforting memories were of drifting to sleep as his dad played accordion. Lake called his devoted, poor working-class parents' Christmas present of a guitar when he was 12 “God”, and believed music was a gift based in love. “A lot of art comes out of difficulty, a lot out of rebellion,” Lake told *NME*. “For me it's imagination.”

ELP's self-titled debut album came in the wake of both their second gig at 1970's Isle of Wight festival, sandwiched between The Doors and The Who and almost stealing the show, and their London debut's dismissal by John Peel as “a tragic waste of talent and electricity”. In some ways a tentative statement of intent – necessarily collecting stray solo pieces as they built a group identity – it treats classical composers with the magpie cheek Led Zeppelin were showing blues songwriters, having to be nudged by Bartok's widow to acknowledge his part in “The Barbarian”. Bach and Janacek meanwhile contribute to the dancing Hammond grooves of “Knife-Edge”. This classical core, building on Emerson's appropriation of such themes with The Nice and the orchestral “Five Bridges Suite” on their 1969 LP *Five Bridges*, Jon Lord's 1969 *Concerto For Group And Orchestra* with Deep Purple, and George Martin's chamber arrangements for The Beatles, gives the album graceful light and shade at odds with ELP's techno-rock reputation.

Lake's 12-minute “Take a Pebble” is the album's heart, its discrete sections finding room for his winsome croon and poetic lyrics, exploratory acoustic folk blues and Emerson's speeding classical improv, nothing outstaying its welcome. The closing, sweet and simple ballad “Lucky Man”, written by Lake when he was 12 and a signature hit in America, uses the rampaging, weird waves of Emerson's first touch of a Moog synthesiser for its coda.

Tarkus (1971) then adds ELP's penchant for violent excess. This was essentially Emerson's characteristic, regularly splitting blood-stained piano keys by stabbing at them with a knife, a crowd-pleasing manoeuvre despised by critics (“One of these days Keith Emerson's Hammond will knife him back,” Charles Shaar Murray sniffed). *Tarkus*'s loose concept of a rampaging machine-beast (justified by William Neal's cover art more than Lake's lyrics for “Tarkus”, which fills side one), allows synth siren-screams, Palmer pummelling and even brief blues-rock guitar.

Side two is more lightly diverse, including Lake and Palmer's hammering dialogue, Emerson's diaphanous piano on “Bitches Crystal”, and perverse vignette “Jeremy Bender”, featuring Emerson's mixture of jaunty honky-tonk and English pub and church piano. But ELP's capacity for abrasive aggression is the album's revelation.

Far from the lofty elitists they were often portrayed as, ELP were also deeply committed to their audience, a devotion that was reciprocated. They were “a people's band”, Lake declared to *NME*. What they offered was, though, the opposite of punk's avowedly proletariat, talent-levelling Year Zero. “Our role was to represent something the fans could identify with in terms of excellence or capability,” he told Phil Sutcliffe, “something they could feel proud of.”

ELP had little interest in rock's wider social currents. “We just entertain the troops and if the audience feels like they want to be the revolutionaries, that's cool,” was the most Lake could manage to *Crawdaddy!* in 1971. They were openly contemptuous of the loose, druggy ethos of counterculture avatars the Grateful Dead, keeping their own live improvisation and lifestyles more rigidly contained, and Emerson's low opinion in the same interview of the working-class potential shown by trade unions wouldn't have endeared him to later punk commissars.

But just listen to *Pictures At An Exhibition*, recorded at Newcastle City Hall on March 26, 1971, and you can hear this people's band among their people. All the prog-haters' clichés about out-of-touch elitists melt away when you listen to a roaring audience response reported throughout their early tours; in Birmingham, they were still calling for more 30 minutes after ELP had climaxed with their version of Mussorgsky's 1874 piece of the same length, which forms the title piece and near-entirety of this great live LP. First heard by Emerson at the Royal

HOWARD BARLOW/REDFERNS; GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS

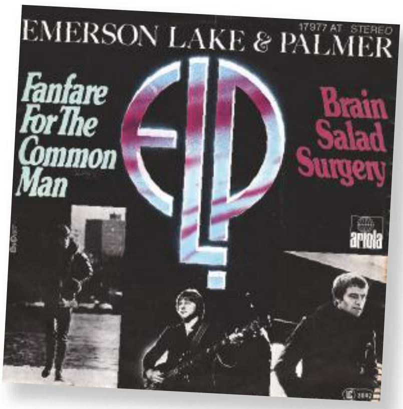
Festival Hall in 1969, he later called it “just a bunch of great tunes” – which, from this tour de force to their hit with Copland’s “Fanfare”, was classical music’s biggest boon to ELP. Lake’s own classical training can be heard in his limpid Spanish guitar during “The Sage”, and his voice is chorister pure on “Promenade Part 2”, gently supported by Emerson’s organ as he sings of “*childhood tears as dry as stone*”.

Emerson’s wild Moog explorations during “The Old Castle” and the crowd’s deliriously bonkers response to it all show the ELP phenomenon at a joyous peak, as the show’s sheer newness and scale of achievement is eagerly absorbed. It’s also a record of tremendous, assured dynamics, with multiple switchback climaxes and melodic highs. The contrasting, Tchaikovsky-meets-ballroom-blitz encore of B Bumble & The Stingers’ garage novelty “Nut Rocker” sees them leave to yet more mayhem. The Quo Army and Bay City Rollers seem apt early ’70s comparisons to the delirium caught here, as high ambition is met with matching delight: “something they could feel proud of”, indeed.

Trilogy (1972) fine-tuned ELP’s innovations, with their individual influences now fully absorbed. “From the Beginning” is a laid-back hippie ballad with Laurel Canyon guitar, “The Sheriff” eerily Elton-esque in its vocal and Taupin-like, comic Western lyrics, while their first Aaron Copland cover, the US hit “Hoedown”, allows more rollicking Moog and Hammond. “Abadon’s Bolero” uses new, 48-track studio capacity for massive overdubs, but goes nowhere noisily during its eight minutes.

Brain Salad Surgery (1973) was then the soundtrack to ELP’s apotheosis, so gargantuan by now in all their doings that punk would seem necessary after all. Controversially pioneering replicable live conditions with the first 100-light proscenium arch and a quadraphonic sound system installed at all shows – along with Lake’s $6,000 Persian rug, Emerson’s Moog monolith, and Palmer’s two-ton hand-carved kit, which their UK manager Stewart Young claimed would “simply smash through most stages” – they required Wembley Arena for their 1974 homecoming. *Pictures At An Exhibition*’s bond with their audience seemed long ago. “Everybody... appeared glazed by it all,” *NME* glumly noted.

Brain Salad Surgery’s twisted HR Giger sleeve, showing a biomechanical female head much like his later *Alien* designs, does, though, house an album maintaining ELP’s ambition. “Toccata” uses Ginastera’s *First Piano Concerto* as a showcase for Palmer’s whooping, attacking electronic-drum innovations. “Still... You Turn Me On” is a Lake groupie dismissal graced by crystalline guitar, “Benny The Bouncer” a gruesome comic spoof with his new, ex-King Crimson co-lyricist Pete Sinfield. The 28-minute “Karn Evil 9” finally attempts the truly conceptual suite that “Tarkus” bluffed, decrying “*loss of humanity as humanity supposedly progressed*”. Its apocalyptic “*show that never ends*” resembles Bowie’s Ziggy in its extravagance, with Afro-Cuban interludes and sufficient, sustaining melody.



The live triple-album *Welcome Back, My Friends To the Show That Never Ends – Ladies And Gentlemen* was intended to clear the deck for a new phase, but proves as unwieldy as its title, only Emerson’s ragtime solos really brightening the mood before the overblown, 35-minute climax of “Karn Evil 9”.

> **First heard by Emerson in 1969, he later called Mussorgsky’s *Pictures At An Exhibition* “just a bunch of great tunes”**

Something in ELP now broke. Taking tax exile in Switzerland, where Lake did press-ups with his neighbour Bowie, unity had been exhausted by the time 1977’s *Works* finally arrived, and commercial momentum irretrievably lost, even after “Fanfare For The Common Man” became their biggest UK hit. The album’s point for Emerson was his “Piano Concerto No 1”, and his desire to be recognised as a modern classical composer, which would stay frustrated. The double album tellingly splits ELP onto separate writer’s sides. But it’s their unified effort on “Pirate”’s unflagging, swaggering, 13-minute orchestral high seas adventure that is ELP’s last hurrah.

The accompanying orchestral tour that Emerson insisted on nearly bankrupted them. *Works Volume 2*, released late in 1977, was an amiable outtakes compendium that remained largely unbought, while *Love Beach* (1978) was a contractually obligatory embarrassment in a sleeve showing them as “the Bee Gees on holiday”, (as Lake put it). They split that year.

Emerson and Lake’s mild ’80s success with Cozy Powell in an ersatz ELP (“Lots of drummers’ names begin with P,” Cozy protested) and two full reunion records, *Black Moon* (1992) and *In the Hot Seat* (1994) – “a complete failure” for Lake – couldn’t turn back time. The mood after a final gig at the High Voltage festival in London’s Victoria Park in 2010 “was like a cross between a party and a funeral”, Lake recalled.

The Emerson I met around then was a gentle, kind man, speaking slowly and operating on his own wavelength, but at peace with his past, and even his punk neighbour in LA, John Lydon. “I always thought it was fucking great that you stuck knives in your organ,” the one-time Johnny Rotten told him over lunch. His 2016 suicide by shotgun was therefore a shocking end.

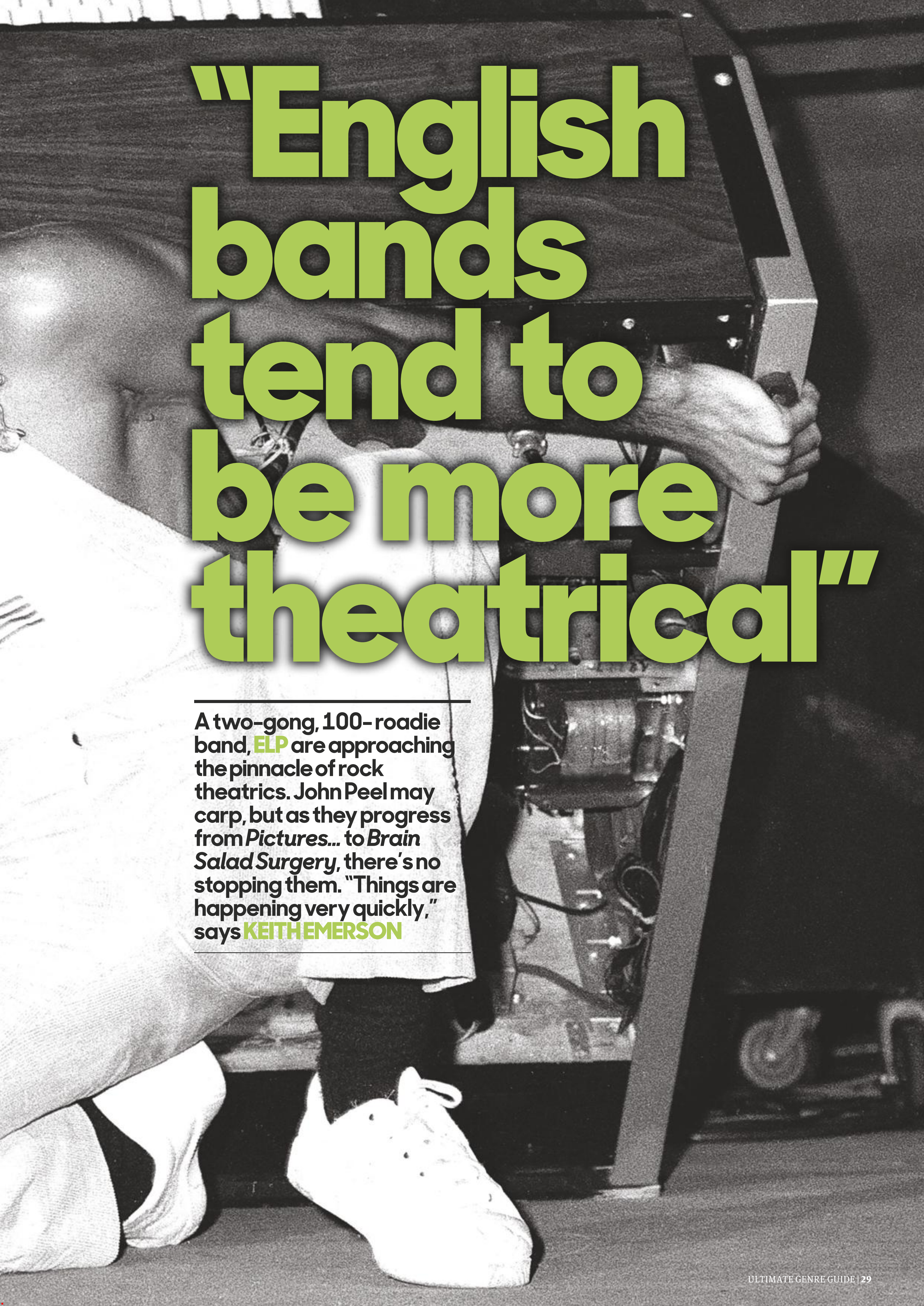
Just before his own death from cancer the same year, Lake tried to define the melancholy that was perhaps his friend’s secret core. Emerson had spent formative childhood years sick and looking out on playing children that he couldn’t join, he’d told Lake, suffering a profound loneliness he channelled into an inner imaginative world. Far from cold pomposity, ELP’s early emphasis on boundless imagination came from a heartfelt generosity. ●

Snow and rock: filming the video for “Fanfare For The Common Man” at the Olympic Stadium in Montreal, February 1977

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Jolly progger: Keith Emerson on stage at Pirates World in Florida, 1971

RICK DIAMOND/GETTY IMAGES



“English bands tend to be more theatrical”

A two-gong, 100-roadie band, ELP are approaching the pinnacle of rock theatrics. John Peel may carp, but as they progress from *Pictures...* to *Brain Salad Surgery*, there’s no stopping them. “Things are happening very quickly,” says KEITH EMERSON

MELODY MAKER DECEMBER 19, 1970

Melody Maker
Out, Santa, Out!
Grand Funk, Leon Russell shows here

“WHAT a waste of talent and electricity!” Greg Lake stepped back from the spotlight and winked into the wings. He was on stage at the Limmathaus, Zurich. Keith Emerson and Carl Palmer were trading freaky phrases on Moog synthesiser and drums. The audience sat enraptured.

Emerson, Lake and Palmer were on the final lap of a Continental tour that had left them happy and exhausted. The kind of biting criticism hurled at them in London, and paraphrased by Greg, seemed irrelevant. Swiss fans loved them and demanded three encores, just as they had done all the way from Vienna.

And the ovation was justly earned. The three musicians have blended their talents in a way that did not seem likely even to their earliest admirers.

The music is exciting, satisfying and at all times sparked by energy and sincerity. Just how valid is their flitting from the classics to jazz and rock? I neither know, nor care.

And it doesn’t worry me if blues material is barely found in their work and that Carl rarely chops firewood on his drums. ELP are mercifully different and strictly non-underground. Hallelujah.

Still slightly shattered after a recent tip to Germany with Colosseum, I flew on wings of molybdenum from cluttered London Airport to rainswept Zurich.

Peter, the young Swiss promoter, who speaks English with an Earls Court accent, drove me at speeds in excess of several kilograms per decimalised millisecond to the Continental Hotel, which resembles every other new hotel in every other European city.

Exchanging one crumpled shirt for another from my suitcase in some vague attempt at dressing for dinner, I descended to the simulated leather restaurant.

Here the group and their bodyguard of road managers were grinning somewhat self-consciously behind a special screen which had been erected to protect the “normal” customers from the offensive sight that is a modern English pop group.

Or perhaps it was to protect the group from the offensive sight of wealthy, grinning Eurocrats.

In the event, bread rolls could be hurled about without fear of reprimand, and the boys drank whisky, brandy, wine, Coca-Cola, beer, vodka and Irish coffee in huge quantities. “And you do need it!” was the cry of their general factotum, white-faced and long-haired Mark Fenwick, a man who can argue with recalcitrant Swiss lighting engineers, organise aeroplane tickets and rave into the small hours, without apparent mental disorder.

It was Mark who organised a marathon club bash that evening for ELP who paraded the cosmopolitan quarter of Zurich under the protective aegis of countless road managers.

Next day we spent with Carl on a visit to the Paiste Cymbal factory in Lucerne, where the ancient craft of cymbal making is carried out on the lake shores.

On the drive back to Zurich, Carl talked about his drumming and the direction of ELP.

“I’m thinking of using my little jazz drum kit on stage. I’ve been playing it a lot recently. I’ve been listening to all the rock drummers, and they all play in eights, you know — THAT kind of rhythm.

“There are so many more patterns to play. There is much more music in the playing of Elvin Jones, and I’d like to play more melodic drum patterns. Jon Hiseman has sussed that out — he gets away from the usual patterns.

“My playing has really changed no end. In ELP I can use the other part of me. My playing is channelled now. I’m using two gongs instead of two bass drums in my solo. I like to roll on them and play patterns on my bass drum.

“I’m really trying to find my own thing. People have said ‘he’s fast’ but somebody said I wasn’t funky, which really annoyed me. I have tried to get across this barrier of the funky thing and technique, and Keith has brought out a lot more in me. At one time, I must confess, I nicked ideas from other drummers. I was playing Elvin Jones records the other day, then I went to see Buddy Rich at Birmingham.

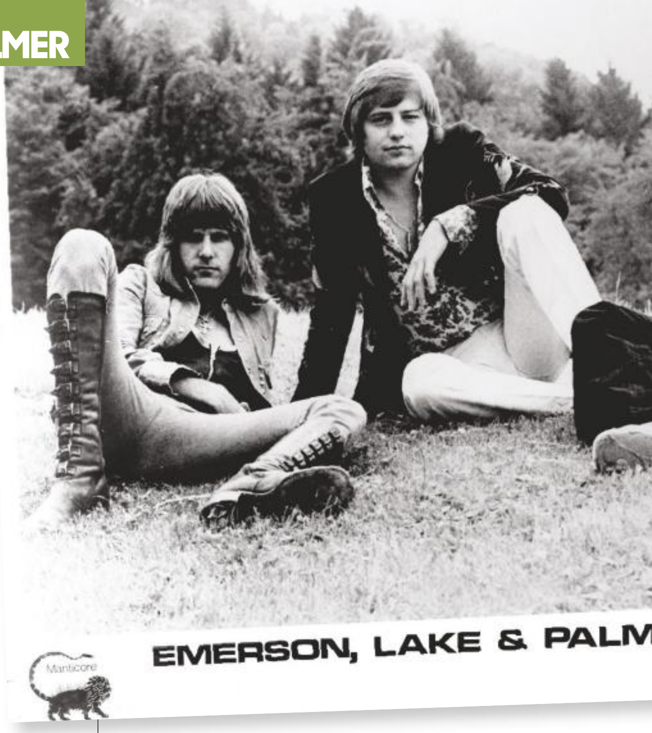
“Buddy really has that technique and he swings. Now – if I could get the FEEL of Elvin Jones and the technique of Buddy – well I could be doing something new in modern rock drumming!”

> “THE CRITICISM HURT, MAN, BUT LOOKING BACK, THE SLAGGING OFF HAS DONE SOME GOOD”
>
> **GREG LAKE**

How did Carl and the group react to the criticism that greeted their initial appearances?

“The worst remark that offended me was the crack about ‘The Keith Emerson Show’, saying that Greg and me were backing musicians. We had rehearsed so hard – you know how long. It was heartbreaking. If we were not strong personalities, it could have done a lot of damage. I haven’t been personally knocked for my playing but it hurts when the whole group gets knocked. And anyway, people should not judge a band by a first hearing. John Peel, who criticised us, is entitled to his opinion. But I think he just wants to get across to the masses as a big underground disc jockey. If I don’t get some food soon I’m going to collapse – and that’s putting it mildly!”

But there was no time for food. As the car squealed to a halt, after getting lost in the rush-hour traffic jam, it was down to a quick shower, and bundling sheet music, drum sticks and musicians into cabs.



The concert hall was packed with over a thousand fans sitting on the floor, waiting patiently.

There was no room off the stage, and there was so much equipment on stage, it was practically impossible to see the band. But they sounded great as they roared through “Pictures At An Exhibition”, “Barbarian”, and “Pebble”.

Back to the hotel, Greg ordered Scotch and Coke and we talked in the bar, until 1am.

He revealed the group were not too keen to visit America, yet awhile. “We can make a living in England and Europe and be far happier than trying to make a fortune in the States,” he explained.

“At the moment the band is £30,000 in debt. If you average it out, only 10 per cent of groups make money in the States.

“The band has gone beyond my expectations when we formed. The criticism hurt, man, but looking back at the Isle Of Wight Festival and after – the slagging off has done some good.

“Keith has been criticised for his showmanship, which has upset him, but WE’VE told him not to worry, we’re more interested in doing the next album. That’s really us.

“We were going to record ‘Pictures’ on the next album but I think that would be dishonest because between three people we’ve got enough talent to do our own material and not Mussorgsky’s.”

On the DC9, bumping back over the mountains and clouds, Keith talked about the next LP.

“I’m getting much more inspired by contemporary music than the classics now,” he said watching Carl reach for a paper bag as we wobbled over the Alps.

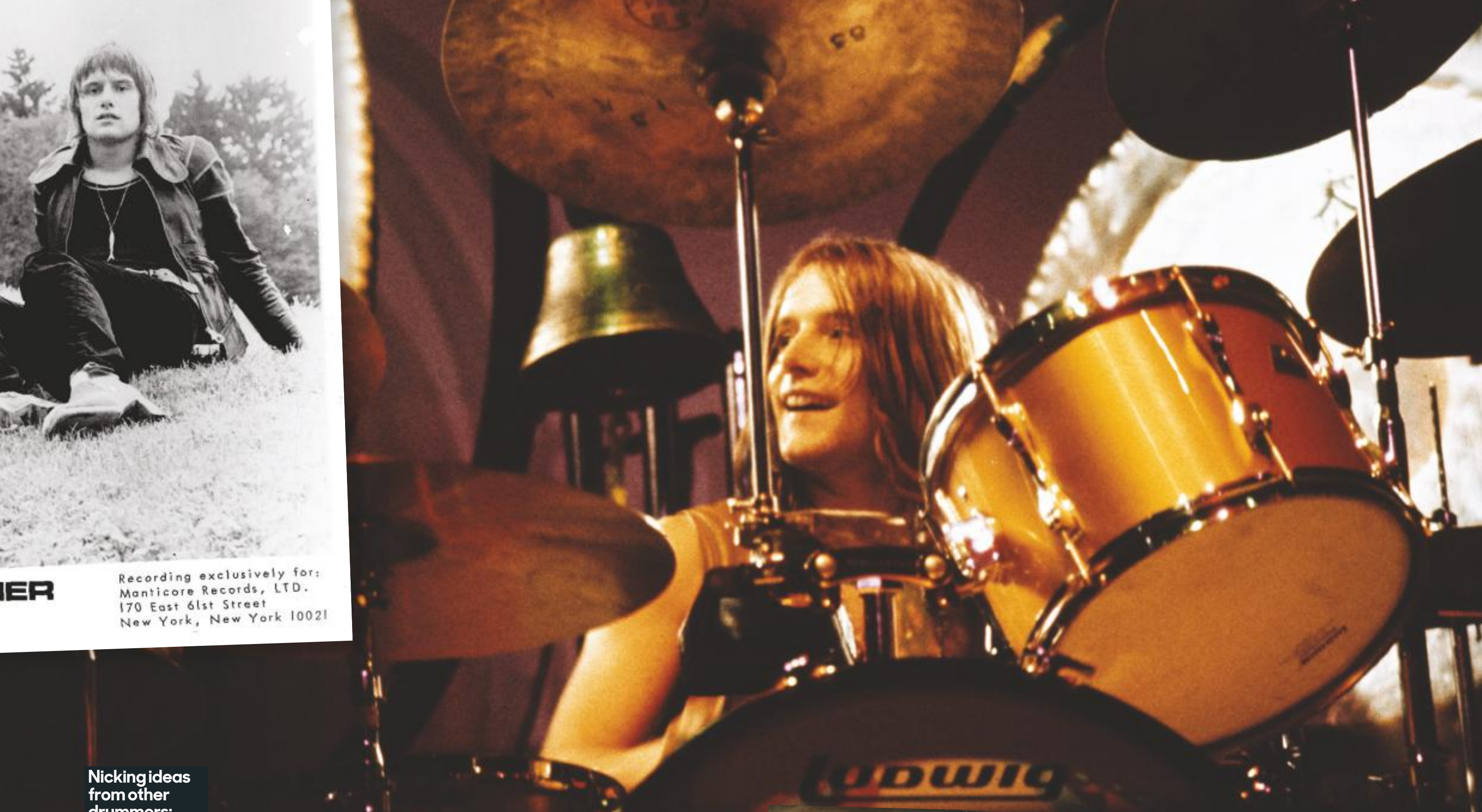
“There’s a piece of music written in 1964 by Ginestera – a piano concerto… it’s too much. I still practise a lot. I’m more conscious of getting into myself, finding out what music I have inside me, finding new things to play.

“I like working with Greg. I get an idea and ring him up at midnight and ask him round to listen to something I’ve written. Carl comes as well, because he likes to be in on arrangements from the beginning.

“Next year it’s important to get our new LP out

Greg Lake, 1970

JORGEN ANGEL/REDFERNS; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



Nicking ideas from other drummers: Carl Palmer on stage in 1970

and I'd like to make a solo piano and organ LP, involving all sorts of styles, gospel, jazz, boogie and blues. I've devised a technique for a different style of 12-bar boogie, in 7/4 time.

"This band is an ideal nucleus of talent, which will enable us to break out and do other things."

CHRIS WELCH

MELODY MAKER MAY 8, 1971

Melody Maker
BIGGEST ISSUE EVER!
FILLMORES TO DIE
56 pages today!

BLOOD streaming from his head, a middle-aged man, white, well dressed, staggered into the headlights of the battered Yellow Cab. The Puerto Rican driver grinned and looked at me quizzically.

The man's son and wife pleaded with the driver. "It's an emergency. Please take us to the hospital."

"It's up to him," said the driver. "OK," I said with studied indifference, still expecting an ambush.

"You'll never know how much this meant to us," said the wife, helping her husband into the emergency department.

"Thank you, thank you," said the son, pushing two dollars through the armour-plated screen that separates the cab driver from his passengers.

"You know – I think it was his wife who hit him," giggled the driver, bumping and skidding through the 3am streets.

New York, New York. You can see the smog lying over the city as the Jumbo drops down from the Atlantic crossing.

Emerson, Lake & Palmer are playing at the Fillmore tonight. And it seems like a good idea to go and see them. See Britain's most exciting band blowing at America's most exciting venue.

Fillmore is a legendary name wherever rock music is played. And the day I arrive, Bill Graham, the equally legendary owner, of both East and West Fillmores, announces on the radio that they are to close. And it is news that comes as a genuine shock to musicians, fans, promoters, managers.

But if Bill Graham says he is tired and fed up with the rock business, he maintains his enthusiasm for music. His praise for Emerson, Lake & Palmer is fairly ecstatic.

And, says a young New York fan jumping on his seat behind me at the first show: "Christ – they're brilliant!"

Earlier, over a meal before the show, Keith told me: "The act is really together now and things are happening very quickly here. The audience reaction has been really... well, inspiring." Keith seemed genuinely surprised.

"The album has sold 40,000 this week and I think we only need a few more for a Gold. We have done five gigs so far, and the first one was in the outback somewhere – very informal – so we felt at ease."

Although Keith had been to the States before with The Nice, Greg had been with Crimson and Carl with the Crazy World, all felt the reaction to ELP has been nothing like the past.

"There has been a big change in the audiences," said Keith. "Now they seem to know us, and they are really pleased to see us here. Our act is a little shorter than it is in England, and we are not doing *Pictures At An Exhibition*, because it would make things too long. But we may play it when we do Carnegie Hall on May 26. We're quite looking forward to that!

"It's a bit of a performance getting here with all our equipment and in some places we have overloaded the power! But we have to use our own PA.

"Apparently Miles Davis has shown an interest in the band. He heard our album and he especially liked Carl's drumming. He may come to the Fillmore tonight."

6014 041
Stereo
EMERSON LAKE & PALMER
Lucky Man
Knife-Edge

The three once skinny English musicians briefly compared pot bellies, sighed and climbed into their Cadillac.

Now dark, the streets outside were jammed with fans. In the foyer were heads little different from those you might see digging similar concerts in Berlin, Belfast or Birmingham.

Young, excited, they poured into the theatre, slow-handclapping an underground movie, anxious for music.

Taking a seat, I felt a rising excitement with them. I had seen the band in Leicester, England, only a few weeks before. How would their incredible arrangements, Keith's phenomenal artistry be greeted – here at the home of rock?

There was not long to wait for the answer. The New York fans seemed like really nice people. Not in the least blasé, they responded with delighted yells to various outbursts of brilliance, listened intently, told each other to keep quiet during the softs, and spontaneously roared during the louds.

"Right on!" yelled a kid nearby, "Far out!" And it didn't sound phoney. "Christ, they really are a super, super group," another told a friend.

The band played magnificently, well aware of the importance of the occasion, and perhaps even with a sense of history, in view of the threatened closure.

Keith was occasionally racing the already furious tempos at times, perhaps through over-excitement. But in view of the brilliant way Carl and Greg kept up with the surges of power, the total effect was fairly devastating.

"Barbarian", their Bartók-inspired opener, ➢

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Recording *Trilogy*, November 18, 1971

Keyboard warrior: Keith Emerson at the Empire Pool in Wembley, April 1, 1974

instantly had the audience knocked back in their seats, Keith leaping from organ to piano in his shining, electric blue suit.

And the unleashing of "Tarkus", the new major work, induced screams at the twists and explosions of the arrangement.

"Take A Pebble" was the subject of much request as it is getting a lot of FM airplay.

This melodic tune has quickly developed into a marathon to equal *Pictures*…, and among the highlights are of course Greg's guitar feature, which had the audience keeping time, and Keith's amazing piano tour de force.

He tore through a stream of improvisation at the piano, moving into choruses from "Lady Madonna", a country hoe-down on electric keyboard, then finally, breathless, back to the ballad voice of Mr Lake, which proved too much for the audience.

They stood up, and remained standing for the rest of the show. Thence to the menace of "Knife Edge" and a cataclysmic "Rondo".

Here Carl zapped into his solo with a kind of savage joy that held the audience in a trance. His drums seemed to be revolving with him, like a slow-motion spin dryer, while his hands were a blur. Perhaps he has found a way to defeat the space and time barrier. At any rate, his sticks are going to catch fire one fine gig.

The group literally staggered off stage, dripping in sweat, and some minutes of yelling from the audience elapsed before they could be induced to offer up their encore.

Here a puzzling situation developed. On the Continent and in England, "Nut Rocker" is their finale, a kind of camp joke, which usually amuses and entertains. The Fillmore people didn't dig it. Perhaps Bee Bumble & The Stingers were prophets unheeded in their own land. At any rate, the tune seemed unfamiliar.

Keith quickly sussed however and dropped the number, to be replaced in a rescheduled programme.

It was an amazing weekend, and proved once again just how today's rock music HAS united the youth of the world against the crumby society.

Bombarded with drugs, crime, war fever, pornography, traffic accidents, phoney patriotism, the young shout their freedom and hang on to their values, through rock music, whoever plays it, and where ever it is played.

CHRIS WELCH

MELODY MAKER AUGUST 3, 1974

Melody Maker

OLDFIELD BAND GIANT SHOWS!

Fame hits the road

GREG LAKE'S London home is a rare and impressive sight. A light glows outside a town house in a quiet street that takes you back to the 19th century. And there is no doubt that Greg enjoys the life that success with Emerson, Lake & Palmer has opened up to the one-time impoverished bass player from the West Country.

But even when the subject for discussion over dinner sometimes comes down to money and the problems of taxation, music is still the guiding force for the amiable, slow-speaking third force in one of rock music's most power-packed ensembles.

Greg's own music veers more towards the pretty ballad and meaningful song, usually written in collaboration with poet Peter Sinfield, and it is a cause for regret that perhaps more of this kind of material has not been forthcoming in ELP.

But they are the kind of band, with so much to play and choose from, where not everything can be made to fit. When there is a keyboard player like Keith Emerson around and a percussionist of the stature of Carl Palmer, then its small wonder that Greg sometimes gets a mite overshadowed.

But Lake's contributions should not be minimised. He plays a singularly attractive brand of acoustic guitar, while his vocal style often reminds me of a schooled John Lennon, the notes pitched spot-on but given just a shade of that nasal cutting edge, on original ballads like "C'est La Vie".

Will it affect his writing if ELP move to the States?

"Yeah, I think it must do. Good or bad, you can't tell. You can see the difference between the American bands' approach to music and everything in general.

"English bands tend to be more theatrical and maybe the move will defuse a lot of the energy going into the theatrical side. I like to see a more all-round thing, more than just musicians playing, although I think the extreme theatrics of the rock business, of which we have certainly been a part, has reached a pinnacle. Everybody is carrying their own light show now!"

ELP really pioneered the big road show?

"Yeah, they were a lot of the things we tried to get into. I think everybody does it so much now, it will count for very little.

"It will go back to the roots. We are going to carry on with the same show for this tour, but in places that haven't seen it yet. The show we did at the Empire Pool was the best show we've ever had, just without a doubt.

"All the experiments we made, and all the money we lost, paid off in the end because we learnt so much from the shows on the previous tours – what not to do – and in the end it paid off.

"Our basic idea was to perfect our own

NORMAN QUICKE/EXPRESS/GETTY IMAGES; DAVID WARNERELLIS/REDFERNS

atmosphere and recreate it each night. It was a good idea but the problems involved were immense. We had one hundred road managers at one point, so you can see the cost.

“And yet we could justify each roadie, until we had a different system designed. It was really down to fatigue among the guys putting up the equipment.

“Now we have spent more time researching how unions work and how we can use them, and all sorts of things – planning up front.”

How many roadies did the band have when they started in 1970?

“Three – no, was it four?”

How did Greg feel about the new ELP album?

“It’s the show. We’re doing all the things we think people want to hear from our past records and most of the new ones on *Brain Salad Surgery*. It’s just the live show.”

You were saying that after this American tour you might back away from the heavy kind of presentation. What could you do after that really?

“Um. One has to do something original. I mean the accent may or may not be on production, it may be something entirely different. The choice is open, and the direction will come entirely from the music. It always does. So before we really lock onto any new ideas, they will come from the music.”

Have you had much time for writing, when you’ve been touring so much?

“No. We’ve played something like 84 shows since November and there has been no time. Except we’ve had a few weeks just lately, and we’ve all done a little bit on our solo albums and generally rested.

“So we are in good spirits now to do the next little bit, and then it’s the last show we do with this particular production.

“We’ve just done a European tour, which was very necessary because we did so much damage last time we went over. We were late for gigs, late setting up and this show was smooth!

“This show was twice as large and impressive and it could go up in about five hours. Before, it was ridiculous – it took all day.

“I’m glad we filmed that tour, looking back, because it was a step, a courageous step. Everybody in the business said, ‘Don’t do it.’ And then when we went to do it again, they said, ‘You’re crazy, you must be crazy.’ But it worked out fine.”

> **“ALL THE EXPERIMENTS WE MADE, AND ALL THE MONEY WE LOST, PAID OFF IN THE END”**
> **GREG LAKE**

How was Greg progressing with his solo album?

“It comes in spurts in between all the other work. You can’t really settle down to a long period on it, just bits and pieces, but it’s coming.”

Greg had talked about it before, over the past couple of years. Why the wait?

“Yeah – it became the fashion, didn’t it? I think it stemmed from the players in bands who perhaps saw the day when their band broke up and whatever.

“It’s an insecure life and I suppose they thought that to make a solo album would enhance their own identity. And so everybody was making solo albums. Which kinda put me off a bit, and still does.

“I really don’t want to make it to come out like a solo album. It certainly won’t be recorded like ‘THE GREAT LAKE ALBUM’.

“I want it to have a title and be an album in its own right. Then if people find out later that I’ve done it, then great and that would be a fantastic dream for me.

“But I want it to survive on its merits, and the main motive is to see what, without compromise, my music will bring forth. Because in a band you compromise and happily so. But it’s interesting to see what will happen when it’s just me.”

Had Greg done many sessions?

“Just little demo things, little experiments, just really putting down tunes to see how they are going to feel. I have actually done no recording that is going to end up on a record. Just a few experimental things I have done after ELP sessions, in an extra hour.”

People might well expect an acoustic album from Greg. Would he go into that?

“Yes I would. I suppose it’s more me than anything. But I’ve always played in tough music bands all my life, the Gods and people like that, and really it’s part of me. In fact on ELP albums I usually put only one track down that’s like an acoustic thing.

“I think anyway, I’m known for acoustic things from my solo spots. Peter Sinfield writes the lyrics and they are better than my own lyrics to my own melodies. It’s just like a flash of magic.

“It’s a good combination that has worked for years. It worked in King Crimson and we’ve done some on *Brain Salad*. Of all the musicians, he’s the one closest to me. He’s the only one I could write lyrics with and he writes exactly the lyrics that I want.” ● ***CHRIS WELCH***

Manticore
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45 rpm
Made in UK
K 13503
K 13503 A
℗ 1973
2.40
Side A
JERUSALEM
(Parry/Blake) (Arr. Emerson Lake & Palmer) (Taken from the Album K 53501 "Brain Salad Surgery")
EMERSON LAKE & PALMER
Produced by Greg Lake
MANTICORE M. LTD.

Karn you dig it: (l-r) Emerson, Palmer and Lake take a bow, 1974

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

JETHRO TULL

Hopping between genres, the one-legged minstrel becomes king of the concept album, until the concepts nearly bury him. *By Nigel Williamson*

THE rich musical panoply of what in the late 1960s was fondly known as "the underground" contained a dazzling array of styles and subgenres. From the Fleetwood Mac-led British blues revival to the sledgehammer riffing of the "heavy" bands, from the pysch-folk of The Incredible String Band to the jazz-fusions of Soft Machine and from the classical allusions of The Nice to the epic concept albums of the prog bands, it was a heady time to be alive. And Jethro Tull ambitiously managed to pitch a tent in every camp.

Tull debuted with a blues-rock album that earned them a verse in The Liverpool Scene's famous parody "I've Got These Fleetwood Mac Chicken Shack John Mayall Can't Fail Blues". Leader and flautist Ian Anderson rearranged Johann Sebastian Bach for flute and rock band and stood on one leg to play a Roland Kirk jazz standard.

The hit single "Sweet Dream" found Tull thundering as heavily as Led Zep. They went ISB fey-mystical on "The Witch's Promise" and turned into latter-day Tudor troubadours on *Minstrel In The Gallery*. As for concepts, from *Aqualung* and *Thick As A Brick* to *A Passion Play* and *War Child*, Tull seemingly had them by the score.

In the sheer breadth of their scope and ambition, arguably no prog rock band rivalled the have-a-go determination of Anderson's Tull to "do it all". Eventually Anderson over-reached himself with *War Child*, conceived as an allegorical movie with a band-and-orchestra double album soundtrack and a plot in which a teenage girl meets God, St Peter and Lucifer in the afterlife, choreographed by Margot Fonteyn and with John Cleese as a (much-needed) "humour consultant".

When the project collapsed under the weight of its own pretension, Anderson wasn't sure whether to be frustrated or relieved. Among prog rock's more embarrassingly elaborate grand follies, they surely didn't get any grander or more embarrassing, as the reddest of red rags to the punk hordes about to trample all over the carefully arranged rococo furniture.

Anderson's typically intransigent reaction to punk was another concept album titled *Too Old To Rock'n'Roll: Too Young To Die!*, sending out a defiant fuck-year-zero challenge to those who denounced his band as dinosaurs. Fads were ephemeral, he declared, but "if you stick around long enough, you come into fashion again".

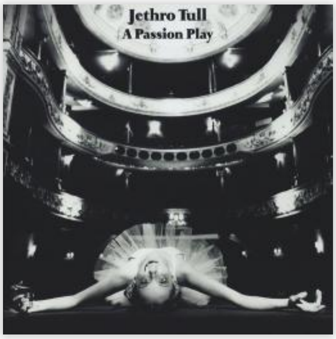
He had a point, too. Half a century on from Tull's debut album, 2018 found Anderson and the latest iteration of his band on a sold-out, celebratory world tour under the banner 'Jethro Tull: The Prog Years', which continues in 2020. ➢

Jethro Tull
Aqualung
SPEND CHRISTMAS SKIING WITH MIXED PARTY REMOTE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS
£2
A

JETHRO TULL
STAND UP

JETHRO TULL
BENEFIT

JETHRO TULL
The St Cleve Chronicle & Linwell Advertiser
THICK AS A BRICK
JUDGES DISQUALIFY "LITTLE MILTON" IN LAST MINUTE RUMPUS
ART DEMO FORCES CLOSURE


Jethro Tull
A Passion Play

JETHRO TULL
WAR CHILD

JETHRO TULL

JETHRO TULL
TOO OLD TO ROCK 'N' ROLL:
TOO YOUNG TO DIE!

JETHRO TULL
SONGS FROM THE WOOD

JETHRO TULL
HEAVY HORSES

JETHRO TULL....STORMWATCH.

THIS WAS
ISLAND, 1968
6/10

STAND UP
ISLAND, 1969
9/10

BENEFIT
CHRYSALIS, 1970
7/10

AQUALUNG
CHRYSALIS, 1971
9/10

THICK AS A BRICK
CHRYSALIS, 1972
8/10

A PASSION PLAY
CHRYSALIS, 1973
6/10

WAR CHILD
CHRYSALIS, 1974
6/10

MINSTREL IN THE GALLERY
CHRYSALIS, 1975
7/10

TOO OLD TO ROCK'N'ROLL: TOO YOUNG TO DIE!
CHRYSALIS, 1976
5/10

SONGS FROM THE WOOD
CHRYSALIS, 1977
8/10

HEAVY HORSES
CHRYSALIS, 1978
7/10

STORMWATCH
CHRYSALIS, 1979
6/10

JETHRO TULL
A stitch in time
C/W SWEET DREAM

When Anderson moved south from Blackpool with various other future members of Jethro Tull in 1967, like many of the bands who went on to become prog stalwarts, their repertoire consisted almost entirely of a mixture of blues and Motown covers.

Too broke to live in London, they set up base in Luton, playing gigs under such names as Navy Blue, Ian Henderson's Bag O' Nails, Bag O' Blues and Candy Coloured Rain. As they never got invited back, the band's booking agent took to changing their name at will. David Rees, author of *Minstrels In The Gallery: A History Of Jethro Tull*, tells a particularly wonderful tale of the band turning up to a gig and realising that the name they didn't recognise on the poster outside the club must be them.

The name Jethro Tull – randomly chosen after the 18th-century agriculturist – eventually stuck because its use coincided with the first time they managed to get a second booking at the same venue. However, confusion reigned for some time after and their debut single, "Sunshine Day", was miscredited to 'Jethro Toe'.

The lineup was for a while in a similar state of flux, but by the beginning of 1968 had stabilised around the quartet of Anderson, his Blackpool schoolfriend Glenn Cornick on bass, and the Luton-born pair of drummer Clive Bunker and guitarist Mick Abrahams. The arrival of the latter, a blues purist who saw the band occupying similar territory to Fleetwood Mac and Chicken Shack, was critical – not least because Abrahams' virtuosity persuaded Anderson, who didn't want to be reduced to playing rhythm guitar in his own group, to take up another instrument.

Possibly influenced by The Moody Blues' flautist, Ray Thomas, whose playing was prominent on the recently released *Days Of Future Passed*, Anderson picked up the flute, learning on the job and developing his own uniquely idiosyncratic style, singing the note at the same time as he blew into the instrument.

Further singularity was provided by Anderson's distinctive stage presence, playing while standing on one leg and draped in an ankle-length second-hand overcoat. The image was not contrived – the coat had been given to him by his father and served as an extra bedcover in his freezing bedsit and he wasn't aware he was standing on one leg until it was highlighted in early reviews in the music press. Yet the effect was attention-catching: he looked like a tramp or a holy fool, the sort of disconcerting figure you might cross the road to avoid. Before long he had added a codpiece to the costume.

Recorded during the summer of 1968, Anderson described Tull's debut, *This Was*, as "sort of progressive blues with a bit of jazz". It was one of the first recorded uses of the 'prog' appellation and the record was well received and sales were encouraging. However, not everyone was impressed: Robert Christgau dissed it in *The Village Voice* as "a combination of the worst of Roland Kirk, Arthur Brown, and your nearest G.O. blues band".

His view may have been harsh but it was obvious that between Abrahams' heads-down, 12-bar barrelling and Anderson's more expansive vision, something had to give. Within weeks of the album's release, Abrahams had quit to form Blodwyn Pig, leaving Anderson free to pursue a new, all-enveloping kind of progressive music that incorporated elements of rock, jazz, blues, folk and even classical influences.

They played gigs under such names as Navy Blue, Ian Henderson's Bag O' Nails and Bag O' Blues

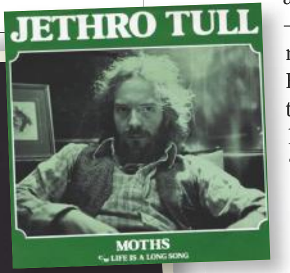
With Martin Barre as Abrahams' replacement on guitar, Tull's second album, *Stand Up*, found a band in transition from blues rock and on the cusp of prog-rock glory.

Meticulously crafted, apart from a jazzy rearrangement of Bach, the album consisted entirely of Anderson originals. Conductor David Palmer – who would play an increasingly influential role before joining the band full time in 1977 – came in to orchestrate "Reasons For Waiting". Although barely four minutes long, "Back To The Family" utilised abrupt and unexpected changes of tempo to create the impression of a suite, a form that would become a Tull trademark and a prog-rock leitmotif.

Elsewhere, on songs such as "Look Into The Sun" and "We Used To Know" (the latter with a chord sequence remarkably similar to the one the Eagles would later use on "Hotel California"), acoustic and electric instruments were finely calibrated. Anderson called the album "the beginning of the real Jethro Tull adventure" and by the summer of 1969 – as Tull were embarking on an American tour with Led Zeppelin – *Stand Up* had reached No 1 in the UK charts.

The Zep tour broke Tull in America and led to an invitation to play Woodstock, which Anderson disdainfully turned down. He later explained that he did not want Tull to be branded as a "hippie band" and left it to The Who and Ten Years After to fly the flag for British rock'n'roll. However, if you listen closely, in the Woodstock movie you can hear Tull's *Stand Up* being played over the PA system between the live acts.

The commercial success of *Stand Up* was assisted by Tull's insistence – unusual among 'underground' bands – on continuing to release non-album tracks as singles. Between 1969 and 1971, the band scored four Top 20 hits: "Living In The Past", "Sweet Dream", "The Witch's Promise" and "Life Is A Long Song", all of which were only available on seven-inch vinyl.



The follow-up album, *Benefit*, marked a final farewell to Tull's roots as a blues band, Anderson's densely literate lyrics set against folkish melodies with rock arrangements, creating a similar soft/heavy dynamic to *Led Zeppelin III*. Yet it was mostly a dress rehearsal for what was to come next.

The first three Tull albums had followed what Anderson called "a gentle progression". Insisting that the fourth album had to be "different", he was also determined to take full creative control and to make a "serious" statement. He took as his theme one of the

High flutin': Ian Anderson on stage at the Royal Albert Hall, October 13, 1970

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Jethro Tull in Amsterdam, 1972: (l-r) John Evan, Ian Anderson, Barrie Barlow, Martin Barre and Jeffrey Hammond

biggest subjects of all – faith in God and its confused and complex relationship with the social construct of organised religion, embroidering his philosophical musings with his own feelings of "fear, guilt, embarrassment, reverence and loathing".

Recorded in a studio that had ironically once been a church (and with Led Zeppelin at work in the adjoining studio on their fourth album), the result was Tull's first full-blown prog-concept, *Aqualung*. Although Anderson later tried to claim it was merely "a whimsical collection of odds and sods", the themes were self-evident, side one containing a series of linked character sketches under the title "Aqualung" and side two subtitled "My God".

With further changes in the lineup, the creative approach was different, too. Tull had previously recorded mostly live in the studio, with Anderson handing over his songs "so the other guys could do the big job of playing them". The sessions for *Aqualung* often found Anderson in the studio alone, playing the drums and overdubbing both acoustic and electric guitars on tracks such as "Locomotive Breath".

From here on, Anderson and Tull went concept crazy. The follow-up, *Thick As A Brick*, was a 44-minute two-part suite that pretended to be a musical adaptation of an epic poem by fictional eight-year-old genius "Gerald Bostock" and came packaged in an elaborate spoof newspaper, recording Bostock's exploits.

Adding harpsichord, xylophone, trumpet, saxophone and strings to the rock-folk-classical melange, it was Tull's most musically 'progressive' album to date and in its way a masterpiece of the genre. Yet there was also an uncomfortable sense that Anderson was hedging his bets, seeking to compete with the commercially successful bombast of ELP and Yes on one level, but at the same time cynically claiming the project was a knowing satire on their grandiose designs.

It was followed by the even more convoluted *A Passion Play*, chronicling the spiritual journey of a voyager named Ronnie Pilgrim in the afterlife, no less. Presented in four "acts" and set variously in purgatory, heaven and hell, with a comic spoken-word interlude that sat uncomfortably between AA Milne and an Aesop fable, the album was ferociously slated.

NME called it "the fall of Jethro Tull", *Melody Maker* found it "rattles with emptiness" and *Rolling Stone* dismissed it as "tedious nonsense". Such brickbats were perhaps deserved – and yet beneath the ludicrously portentous concept lay some epically fine prog rock and the album gave Tull their second US No 1.

Top that? Easy. Enter *War Child*. Only this time Anderson had gone too far. After the project's original wildly over-the-top multimedia concept had collapsed, he was left to salvage what he could from the wreckage and put out the remnants on a disappointingly old-fashioned non-conceptual album of straightforward songs.

It was only a momentary pause in his heroic ambition. *Minstrel In The Gallery* contained spoken-word intros and a 17-minute four-part suite titled "Baker St Muse", while *Too Old To Rock'N'Roll: Too Young To Die!* was intended as the soundtrack to a muddled rock musical. Thankfully it was never staged, and even fervent Tull fans generally regard the album as an artistic nadir.

Bungle In The Jungle
JETHRO TULL
Back-Door Angels

A change of direction was sorely needed and Anderson's moonlighting as Steeleye Span's producer provided the impetus. While others folded under the punk onslaught, between 1977–79 Anderson fashioned a trilogy of pleasing folk-rock albums that prevented Tull from joining the scrapheap.

Over the next two decades there were another eight albums of bewilderingly diverse stripe, as Tull embraced synthesisers (1982's *The Broadsword And The Beast*), hard rock (1987's *Crest Of A Knave*, which won a Grammy for Best Metal Performance) and world music (1995's *Roots To Branches*).

The glory days of Tull were long gone, but old prog rockers can never stop conceptualising. As a solo artist Anderson was still fashioning epic albums well into the new millennium, including a *Thick As A Brick* sequel, released on the 40th anniversary of the original. ●

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/GETTY IMAGES

"I'm writing things I can't play"

With America beginning to hop to their beat, JETHRO TULL are upping their game, carving up a Stradivarius in search of transatlantic success. "In the States the groups were like the MC5," unwashed flautist Ian Anderson tells Chris Welch. "We were a little more subtle."

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

The *Stand Up/ Benefit* Jethro Tull lineup, 1970: (l–r) Ian Anderson, Glenn Cornick, Martin Barre and Clive Bunker

MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 16, 1971

Melody Maker
JAZZ GIANTS DUE

A BRITISH band's conquest of America is the modern-day equivalent of the Crusades. Instead of seeking the Holy Grail, they pursue the Holy Dollar with religious fervour.

It is a stirring tale, this pioneering by bold bands of adventurers across the prairies, mountains and deserts in search of limitless treasure.

See them battle with the pirate agents and promoters. Thrill to the sound of savage audiences whooping a greeting to electric warriors from far lands.

And when they return, battle weary and triumphant, the rock crusaders strip off their boots, sink into a pile of skins and recount their deeds, hardships and struggles, eyes glinting, lips curled over their teeth.

"It's often extremely difficult to find a launderette," said one such hunter, Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull, this week.

Ian has plenty of experience in the art of touring America. His band has been 10 times, on each occasion building up their reputation, until now they stand as one of the most popular and highly paid.

jethro tull
the witch's promise : teacher
Chrysalis

It's often difficult for fans at home to realise just how big are some of the groups they used to see at their local bierkeller or jive bar. Jethro are giants in the States, but on their native heath… "they hardly played *Aqualung*, our last LP".

Just how did Ian and the lads crack that impenetrable continent? What was the story of Tull's success? And what of launderettes? Read on.

"America is consistent for us but here it's trailed off as far as most people are concerned, in that we are not talked about so much. In the final analysis – we do all right. We were too fast coming up in England. In America it was very slow. I saw Yes in America and they went down well – much better than we did on our first tour. We bombed out in a lot of places.

"Our first tour was in January '69 when we played the Fillmore in New York. All our gear had been sent to Boston, and we were on with Blood, Sweat & Tears. We were completely up the creek. They vaguely knew our albums, but basically we were unknown.

"At the time I thought it would be our first and last tour. I thought England was the place and that we were a little club group. In the States, the groups at the time were like the MC5 and we were a little more subtle. I was surprised when we started to get a good reaction.

"After 13 weeks we lost money, so we had to go back. The second tour was with Led Zeppelin and much improved. We played to 5–10,000 a night and we seemed to be scoring. On the third tour we were on our own, earning money, and we felt good.

"I hated the country at first – I really didn't want to know. It distressed me to see so many kids taking drugs. But after playing four nights a week, suddenly my attitudes changed. America became the place to play and England was where I wanted to live.

"AFTER THE GIG IT'S STRAIGHT TO THE HOTEL, AND IT'S HARD TO SLEEP… SO YOU PLAY CARDS"

IAN ANDERSON

"On our last tour we actually had a few days off. Yes, I remember now – we had a day off in Vancouver!"

Does Ian feel physically exhausted after an evening of fluting, guitaring and leaping?

"Not really exhausted – if you keep a sensible pace, and don't use all your energy right away. It's like a game of football. You give up smoking and do deep-breathing exercises. We rehearse before a tour and gradually work up to it, with a final dress rehearsal. When we're on tour it's total involvement. Even when we're not touring, we're recording.

"The first week home after a tour of the States is written off completely to adjust to the time changes. Then you get bored and start writing or practising. That's something we're just beginning to do – practice. I'm starting to practise the flute for the first time.

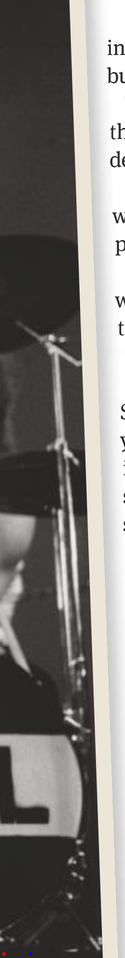
"Basically, I have always just jammed in the studio. But because of the structure of what the band is doing now, we have to improve ourselves technically. I find I'm writing things I can't play. I can only play in four keys, and I remember being given a piece of rock on a wooden stand for flute playing by the *MM*. If I'm going to win another bit of rock next year, I'd better start practising.

"I've been practising the violin lately – well it's all music. I bought a violin in New York and cut it up to fit it with frets. Then I taped on a pick-up. I finally used a hack-saw to take out a great lump, and inside saw the maker's name – 'Stradivarius.' Oh, I'm sure it's a fake. I couldn't be that unlucky. I've got another violin which is a much better

"It's not a dressing gown!": Anderson fronting Tull at the Isle Of Wight Festival August 30, 1970

DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS

The *Aqualung* lineup, London, March 11, 1971: (l-r) Martin Barre, Ian Anderson, Jeffrey Hammond, Clive Bunker and John Evan



instrument. I don't think I could play it on stage, but it would be good for sessions."

Tull have a kind of maxi-single on release at the moment with five songs, which Ian describes as an interlude between albums.

They have a new album on the way about which he waxed enthusiastic and they are playing a British tour this month.

"It'll be nice to do a proper tour of England, where it will be so much more relaxed than the States."

How much of a strain was it on the road?

"It's a routine. Sometimes it's a 'plane job. Sometimes you can go by car, which means you can see something of the country. Usually it's a two hour 'plane trip. If you're late you go straight to the gig. If you're early you get a sound check. After the gig it's straight to the hotel, and it's difficult to sleep because you are shattered, so you play cards. We play 'Black Bitch' and if my wife travels with us, she's one more hand at cards. There's no club going – we all go to bed, and we don't very often go outside the hotel, except to find a launderette. We go to bed about 2am, then up at 10am and off again, to the airport.

"Once you get into the routine of airports you can work reasonably well, and write songs on the 'plane, or catch up on reading. As I said, our main problem is finding launderettes, for – er – highly personal wash. None of us wash our stage gear."

I mentioned that Ian's famous old dressing gown looked like it hadn't been cleaned for half a century.

"It's not a dressing gown!" said Ian with mild indignation, eyes popping slightly. "It cost £60 and I had it made in Carnaby Street. But it has got slightly ripped. If I don't wear it – I feel uncomfortable. It stinks something awful, but it's part of me. It's a personal piece of memorabilia, and as much a part of playing as my flute. It's only about two years old, but it started off when my dad gave me an overcoat to keep me warm when I came down from Blackpool. It got nicked in Chicago. The new one is a frock coat. I expected it would cost me about £15 – not sixty quid! But it's a nice bit of material. None of that cheap Rod Stewart rubbish, y'know."

INSIDE
(Ian Anderson)
from the album 'Benefit', ILPS 9123
JETHRO TULL
Produced by: Ian Anderson
Ian Anderson Music/ Chrysalis Music Ltd.
℗ 1970
WIP 6081
(WIPx. 1063)
jethro tull
life is a long song
up the 'pool
dr. bogenbroom
from later
nursie

But apart from trouble with laundry – what about the mace battles, the untamed audiences, the brutal police?

"It's pretty humdrum really. But once we played at Hampton Beach..."

Go on...

"And we played the most disastrous set of the tour. We played so badly we decided to get them clapping on the beat. People started jumping on the stage and fighting. The promoter tried to snatch the microphone away from me and kept yelling, 'I'm the promoter – get off, get off!' But we carried on the playing and the police came pouring in. I understand they haven't held any concerts there since."

In a way its rather comforting, that the hopping flautist who can still raise the eyebrows of any passing City gent, is more concerned with the washing of smalls than spreading chaos. ●

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

18+

WHAT IS
AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

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Cheap constant access to piping hot media
Protect your downloadings from Big brother
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18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

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We have everything for all of your needs. Just open https://avxlive.icu

SOFT MACHINE

Psychedelia, prog, rock and jazz fusion, all lightly brushed with absurdism – Wyatt's undulating crew proved an endlessly pliable sonic machine. *By John Lewis*

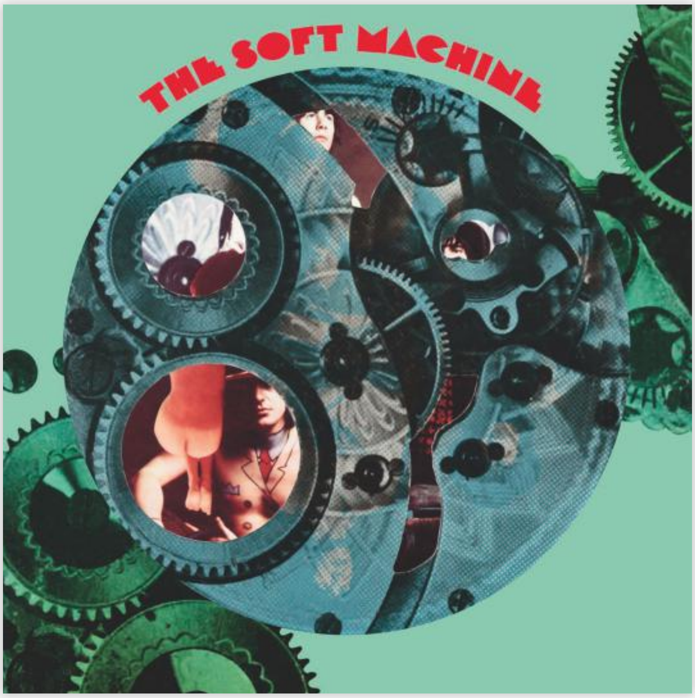
SOFT MACHINE have been several different groups over the course of their existence – a freakbeat combo who morphed into pioneers of psychedelic whimsy; an experimental prog band who eventually became a rigorous jazz rock act. The bulk of their output has been instrumental, but they still managed to spawn three distinctive vocalists – Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers and Daevid Allen – who questioned the fundamental nature of Anglo-American rock music.

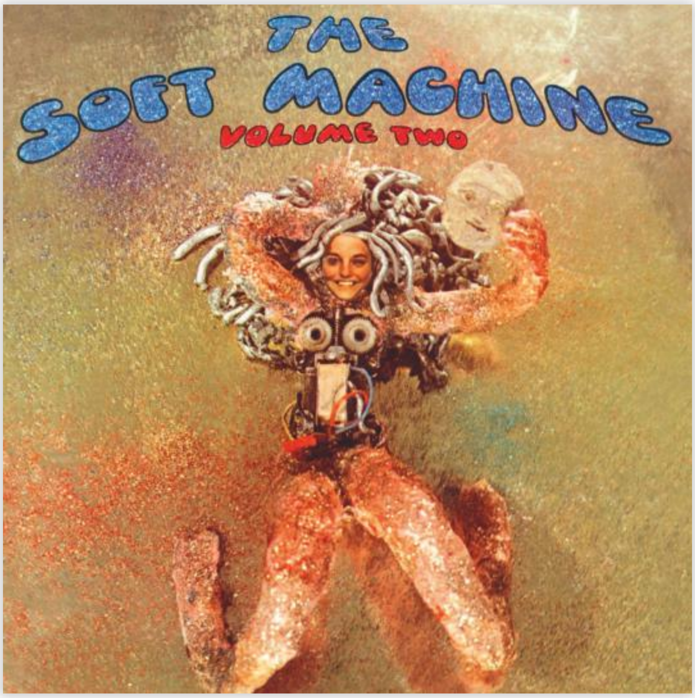
Uniquely among prog-rock bands, Soft Machine tended not to use guitars, but they've still managed to feature several of Britain's top guitarists – Andy Summers from The Police, fusion guru Allan Holdsworth and jazz luminary John Etheridge. And the band has been the seedbed for dozens of other hugely successful musicians – film composer Karl Jenkins, big-name saxophonists Elton Dean, Ray Warleigh and Theo Travis, and drummers John Marshall and Gary Husband have all passed through the band's ranks over the past half century.

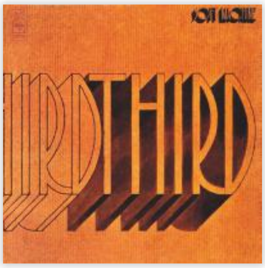
The band formed in 1966, from the ashes of the Daevid Allen Trio and the Wilde Flowers, featuring drummer Wyatt, bassist Ayers, Aussie guitarist Allen and organist Mike Ratledge. The only recording made by this quartet would be the February 1967 single, "Love Makes Sweet Music" – a piece of charming freakbeat, not quite poppy enough for *Ready Steady Go!*, yet not quite freaky enough for the Summer of Love. Its flipside, "Feelin', Reelin', Squealin'", is closer to the hippie ideal, a piece of flute-drenched psychedelia featuring a growling baritone-voiced Kevin Ayers on the verses and a tenor-pitched Dadaist chorus from Wyatt. It would also be the last recording that the band would release featuring a guitar for nearly a decade.

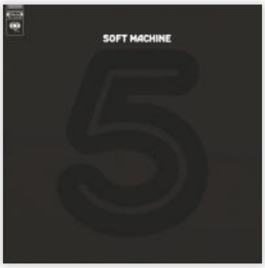
An early live engagement saw them on the French Riviera, playing in a production of Picasso's outrageous, erotic play *Desire Caught By The Tail* and already displaying a fondness for jazz-inspired improvisation. Allen left the band on the way home – denied re-entry to the UK for overstaying the terms of his initial visa from Australia, he stayed on the Continent to form the Anglo-French outfit Gong – but his surrealist vision lived on for the first two Soft Machine albums. In particular was Allen's interest in the teachings of the French "pataphysicist" Alfred Jarry, an eccentric, proto-Dadaist prankster who counted Picasso, Gauguin, Duchamp and Oscar Wilde as friends.

The three-piece band's debut album, 1968's *The Soft Machine*, is a wonderfully endearing collection of skewed pop songs. It was played with a certain rigour that owed much to the band's contemporaries the ➢


THE SOFT MACHINE


THE SOFT MACHINE
VOLUME TWO




SOFT MACHINE
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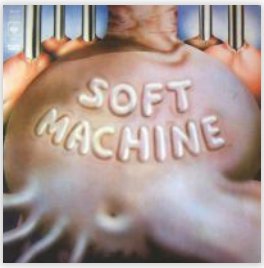
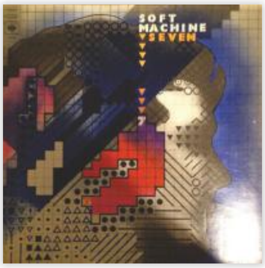
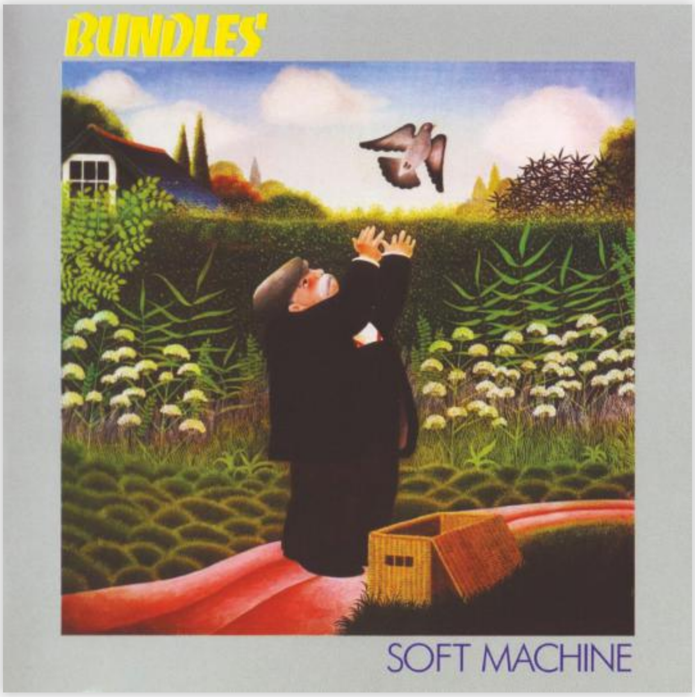

SOFT MACHINE


SOFT MACHINE SEVEN


BUNDLES
SOFT MACHINE

SOFT MACHINE
Softs

THE SOFT MACHINE
ABC PROBE/BARCLAY, 1968
8/10

VOLUME TWO
PROBE, 1969
8/10

THIRD
CBS, 1970
9/10

FOURTH
CBS, 1971
6/10

FIFTH
CBS, 1972
7/10

SIX
CBS, 1973
7/10

SEVEN
CBS, 1973
6/10

BUNDLES
HARVEST, 1975
8/10

SOFTS
HARVEST, 1976
7/10

Pataphysicists got a brand-new band: The Soft Machine in January 1967 – (l-r) Daevid Allen, Mike Ratledge, Robert Wyatt and Kevin Ayers

Jimi Hendrix Experience (whom the band would support on a mammoth US tour that year), but Wyatt, Ayers and Ratledge all wore their experimentalism lightly – like Alfred Jarry, this was a band who were very consciously not taking themselves too seriously. "Why Am I So Short?" is a hymnal piece of Wyatt whimsy, "So Boot If At All" has a certain heavy rock swagger, with organist Mike Ratledge playing like a metal guitarist; "Why Are We Sleeping" prefigures early Blur; while "We Did It Again" is a hypnotic one-chord groove that anticipates the motorik krautrock that Can would be making a few years later. The album's highlight might be "Lullaby Letter", an angular proto-punk miniature with unusual chord changes that sounds oddly reminiscent of Nirvana, with Ratledge again playing a heavy metal solo on his Lowrey organ.

After the US tour with Hendrix (when Andy Summers briefly joined the band), Ayers left, to be replaced by the band's roadie Hugh Hopper, and the band regrouped to create the 1969 LP *Soft Machine Volume Two*, which takes the Jarry-esque absurdism of the first album into an almost symphonic dimension. The influence of the band's friends Pink Floyd is strong (Wyatt, Ratledge and Hopper had backed Syd Barrett on his 1968 solo debut, *The Madcap Laughs*). But the band also take a conceptual direction that owes much to Frank Zappa (apparently, on Zappa's recommendation, they split the album's two dominating suites into a shorter series of segued tracks to maximise on publishing income). The first of these, "Rivmic Melodies", is a 17-minute suite filled with compelling shorter pieces. *"Good evening, we now have a choice selection of rhythmic melodies from the Official Orchestra of the College of Pataphysics,"* announces Wyatt over a jazzy, loping groove, before launching into a *Sesame Street*-style recitation of the alphabet over a quirky melody (track four, "A Concise British Alphabet, Pt II", repeats the track with the alphabet recited in an entirely random order). Anchored by Ratledge playing suspended chords on the piano, often with him overdubbing buzzsaw organ riffs over the top, it's a thoroughly appealing album, and a fine vehicle for Wyatt's plaintive, mischievous choirboy tenor voice. "Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening" is a lovely baroque ballad, while "Hibou Anemone And Bear" and "Orange Skin Food" both spin out into the kind of territory explored by Frank Zappa on *Hot Rats*, with Hugh's brother Brian Hopper playing harmonised solos on multiple reed instruments. Best of all might be "Hulloder", presumably written in the States, where Wyatt checks his privilege over the course of a lengthy, stream-of-consciousness ramble (*"If I was black and I lived here/I'd want to be a big man in the FBI… but as I'm not/And because I'm free, white and 21/I don't need more power than I've got/Except sometimes when I'm broke"*).

After a US tour with Jimi Hendrix, Kevin Ayers left, to be replaced by the band's roadie Hugh Hopper

Mike Ratledge

The entire album is a cornucopia of ideas, any one of which could have seen them moving in a dozen different directions. The direction that they did end up taking, like many other jazz-loving rock musicians, was inspired by Miles Davis's album *Bitches Brew*. At the end of 1969, Wyatt visited a London jazz club where the pianist Keith Tippett was performing with his eight-piece, one that would later feature on his 1970 Polydor album *You Are Here… I Am There*. Wyatt was impressed by the horn frontline that lurched between tightly written harmonies and free improvisation. "We asked if we could borrow them to add spice to our distinctive but inflexible 'bees-in-a-bottle' sound and they generously agreed to help out," says Wyatt.

Elton Dean (alto saxophone), Marc Charig (cornet) and Nick Evans (trombone), along with Lyn Dobson (flute and alto) and Jimmy Hastings (flute and bass clarinet), were added to the Soft Machine lineup, forming a short-lived septet (Soft Machine weren't alone in their admiration of Tippett's band

BIPS/GETTY IMAGES, PICTORIAL PRESS LTD / ALAMY STOCKPHOTO

(Above) *Third*-era lineup – (l-r) Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Robert Wyatt and Elton Dean – before their concert at the Albert Hall, August 13, 1970

SOFT SPACE Part I
(Edited Version)
(Jenkins)
EMI
HARVEST
Soft Machine
Publ MCPS
SHAR 5155A
℗ 1978
Soft Machine Music Ltd
HAR 5155
Produced by
Mike Thorne
SOFT MACHINE

– King Crimson also hired Tippett, Charig and Evans around this time).

The resulting album, 1970's *Third*, turned out to be the way station between psychedelic prog and full-on jazz rock. Hugh Hopper's composition "Facelift" is a challenging and intriguing mix of ambient free improvisation and jazzy, high-pressure rock. It is a blend of two live performances recorded at Croydon's Fairfield Halls and then manipulated in the studio, Teo Macero-style, and subject to post-production tape loops. Ratledge's "Slightly All The Time" starts as a playful swing groove that moves into several stages and shifting time signatures; while the closing track, "Out-Bloody-Rageous", starts and ends with a nod to Terry Riley's *A Rainbow In Curved Air*, with overdubbed layers of organ creating a ghostly, hypnotic quality for the first and last five minutes of the track, sandwiching a jagged 7/4 groove that features one of Mike Ratledge's best fuzz-organ solos.

The album's penultimate track, Wyatt's "Moon In June", might be the band's masterpiece, but it was one that Ratledge and Hopper didn't particularly like. Wyatt sings a highly self-referential lyric that provides a running commentary of the recording process (the words would change when he performed the song live, at BBC Radio sessions, or at the Prom concert that Soft Machine headlined that summer). Wyatt plays drums, bass and keyboards for most of the track, his sparse approach reminiscent of his forthcoming solo albums like *Rock Bottom*. "Moon In June" could have augured a new era for the band as a Wyatt-esque conceptual pop group, but instead it became the band's last vocal track. 1971's *Fourth* sidelines Wyatt and it would be his last with the band. Hugh Hopper is the dominant songwriter, and many of the textures explored by the band start to become self-consciously jazzier. Roy Babbington joins the band on four tracks to play upright bass, complementing Hopper's bass guitar, while Ratledge puts his electric piano through a ring modulator – an FX unit popular with the likes of Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea. Elton Dean's first songwriting contribution, "Fletcher's Blemish", is a series of tightly written cued passages that are linked by free improvisation, consciously referencing *Bitches Brew*. Ratledge writes the bitty, fiddly "Teeth", while Hopper's "Virtually" is a four-part suite that moves between gentle harmonies and free-jazz freakouts. The waltzing "Kings And Queens" is a rare point of meditative peace on the album.

By the time of *Fifth* (1972), Soft Machine had fully morphed into a fusion outfit, broadly along the lines of Chick Corea's Return To Forever or John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra. Wyatt had been replaced by two jazz drummers – Phil Howard on side one, John Marshall on side two – both playing with a weird degree of restraint. Ratledge had ditched his Hohner pianet, the clunky-sounding electric piano he'd used on previous albums, and started using a Fender Rhodes, feeding it through numerous effects units and enjoying its glossy, ethereal qualities on tracks like "M C" and the aqueous ambient jazz of "Drop". "All White" is a rigorous modal groove in 7/4, "Pigling Bland" is an episodic funk ballad, while "As If" is a fidgety and idiosyncratic piece of collective improvisation written by Ratledge.

What becomes apparent is that, for all the meretricious playing, there is no-one in the band capable of acting as a Chick Corea or a Herbie Hancock. Ratledge is great at texture and at "comping" (providing inventive backing for others), and he could get away with playing simple fuzz-rock riffs on his wheezy, buzzy Lowrey organ in earlier incarnations of the band. But, as a classically trained pianist dabbling in jazz, his limitations as an improviser become apparent. Even the band's strong instrumentalists, like Elton Dean, seemed reluctant to really take the lead.

Dean left after *Fifth* to be replaced by multi-reedist Karl Jenkins from Ian Carr's Nucleus, who started to dominate the band on 1973's *Six*, a double album that mixes live and studio recordings. A voyage through enjoyably disorientating time signatures, "37 ½" features some impressive drumming from John Marshall; "EPV" and "Lefty" are both interesting ambient explorations featuring an FX-laden Fender Rhodes; while the funky groove of Ratledge's "Gesolreut" recalls Eddie Harris's "Freedom Jazz Dance", the soul-jazz standard covered by Miles Davis. The most memorable track on the studio album is "Stanley Stamp's Gibbon Album" a propulsive groove set around Ratledge's fugal piano riff. But it's the angular "Stumble" that sets out Jenkins' stall as a songwriter, and sets the tone for how the band would continue on 1973's *Seven*.

By now Hopper had left, to be replaced by Roy Babbington, and the writing is dominated by Jenkins, who pens seven of the tracks, specialising in simple, static and rather repetitive grooves like "Nettle Bed". "Carol Ann" is a pretty, spartan ballad, "Day's Eye" is a rigorous workout in 9/8, while Ratledge introduces a synth to the band for the first time – a modular analogue EMS model called the AKS.

It's tempting to see subsequent albums as an afterthought, but *Bundles* (1975) is a fascinating change in direction. Ratledge is increasingly sidelined – Jenkins is even starting to overdub keyboards – but the real USP is that the band have introduced guitar for the first time since their debut single. Where the sonic space usually occupied by guitar was filled by Ratledge's FX-laden keyboards, here Allan Holdsworth starts to dominate proceedings, playing with a John McLaughlin swagger on "Hazard Profile", showing an ECM delicacy on "Gone Sailing" and telling a compelling narrative tale on "Land Of The Bag Snake". Holdsworth would soon be lost to America (to join The Tony Williams Lifetime), to be replaced by the more introspective John Etheridge on the rather reflective and ambient 1976 album *Softs*.

Soft Machine have continued to exist, on and off, since then, as a legacy project – also known, variously, as Soft Ware, Soft Works and Soft Machine Legacy – drawing from an alumni of around 50 people and often featuring some very big names in British jazz (including John Taylor, Dick Morrissey and Theo Travis). But their repertoire concentrates almost exclusively on the mid 1970s incarnation of the band. There are dozens of fascinating iterations of Soft Machine that could provide fruitful territory for exploration. ●

(Below) *Bundles* lineup, 1975 – (c/wise from top left) Roy Babbington, Ratledge, John Marshall, Allan Holdsworth and Karl Jenkins

HULTON-DEUTSCH/HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES; TONY RUSSELL/REDFERNS

Soft Machine's Hugh Hopper (left) and Robert Wyatt play the Amougies Festival in Belgium, October 1969

"We're a very unplanned group"

PHILIPPE GRAS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Fresh from new collaborations, SOFT MACHINE's Robert Wyatt is bridging the jazz-rock divide. "I think of myself as a catalyst for the real musicians," he tells Michael Watts

MELODY MAKER JANUARY 2,1971

Melody Maker

RADIO 1 TO DIE?

1971 pop squeeze

1970 was a very good year for Robert Wyatt. It was the year in which he established himself as a major drummer in contemporary British music; the year in which he experimented outside the confines, unrestrictive though they are, of The Soft Machine, dallying briefly with Kevin Ayers, then concentrating more strongly on his role inside the Keith Tippett Centipede project, with whom he has played so impressively on their three initial outings.

And then, as the year has drawn to an end, he has further established his own identity by becoming a prime mover in Symbiosis, that excitingly impromptu, free-blowing band, and finally topping off the proceedings by producing his own album – you believe he produced it, too?

He has called it *The End Of An Ear*, which is quite a funny pun, I suppose. But then, Robert it quite a funny person with his huge fur French hat crammed down over his untidy lank hair.

Whenever I think of Robert I think of that hat, and there are other mental images, too. Of Robert slouching around in that curious way of his, with his creased trousers that are always too short flapping around his ankles, dressed in the maroon coat that always looks a size too big; of Robert lathered with sweat as he sits stripped to the waist, flailing away like a man ➢

possessed under the hot lights of the Albert Hall during the Softs' televised concert; and then there is Robert sitting with bitter tears in his eyes in a dressing room in Rotterdam because he hates the performance he has just given.

Because, you see, he's nothing if not an emotional person. He is also nothing if not a nice person, and niceness is not an excessively common quality among musicians and entertainers. Much of the secret of his success is that people respond so readily to his spontaneity and generosity of spirit. Everybody wants to work with him, and when they have made the gig they come back for more. There was nobody happier and more elated amongst those 50 people in Centipede than Wyatt, and no one more brought down when the band received reviews that were generally cautious and, in one instance, bitterly hostile.

"I'm upset, not for my own sake," he explained later, "but for Keith and Julie." And he meant it.

How do you feel about interviews, Robert? "I regret most I've done when I see what's happened, but then I regret most performances on records, too. I think one of the big difficulties is that written words and spoken words aren't the same thing. You actually think different things in print – I do. Things I say, words I use in speech, if I was writing down the same thought, I actually wouldn't use the same word. There's nothing anybody can do about that, really. It's misleading. I find I say things just to pad some things out, or to be clever for a minute while I'm trying to think what I really think. I can see the value of them, but I still find it makes demands... It upsets me sometimes, put it like that. But that's true of anything."

But Hugh [*Hopper*] and Mike [*Ratledge*] don't like interviews, do they? "Well, Hugh is pathologically shy. Very. The fact that he goes on stage is part of it. You don't get up on your own, you get up with equipment and amplifiers and volume. It's very private on stage; it's not an exhibitionistic thing to do at all.

"People are often surprised at musicians and performers being introverts but it doesn't surprise me. What surprises me is that people who are extroverts are musicians. What amazes me is when a brilliant musician is an extrovert, because if they're extrovert it probably means that they spent their time in their teens rushing round coffee bars meeting people, and I'm surprised that they had the time to learn to play anything at the same time.

"Whereas I find that introverts are less social people, are very often the ones who learn to play instruments properly. The one way you can hide is to be a performer, because it's really a false identity to be on stage. You can really feel untouchable and private.

"The group has become primarily instrumental, for instance, because of our characters, in a way. We're a very unplanned group in our direction. We just sort of drift from whatever area seems to excite us at the moment to whatever other area seems to excite us. Even the simple things, like the gaps, the lack of gaps, is because we are embarrassed, I think, to have a silence on stage where the audience is expected to react back to us. I just find that totally embarrassing – ending a number, bang, then straight into the next one, all that business. I can't bear it."

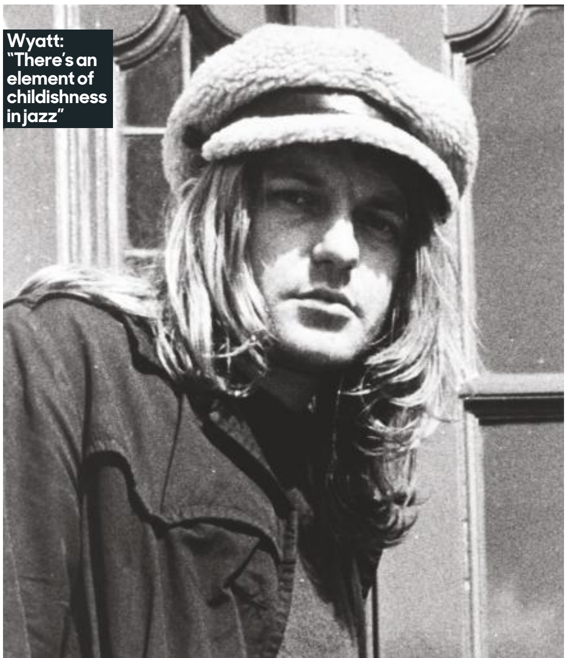
> "I STILL FEEL LOST. SOMETIMES I'M BACK WHERE I STARTED SIX YEARS AGO"
> ROBERT WYATT

You don't always appear happy with the group... What do you think it's doing wrong for you personally? [*Long pause*] "All the things you can talk about in music we agree on. We all share similar ideas on the possibilities of freedom and the different types of freedom, and structure, and discipline, and what use they are, and when they're useful and when they are not, and how to cooperate, and still express yourself. But music isn't, like, conscious ideas, concepts, if you had them; the real music is the way you play, the actual note that you put after the note before.

"And quite simply, sometimes we aren't playing the same piece of music – the drumming isn't the drumming for the bass line that Hugh's using, or there's another bass line that isn't being played, or the rhythm section thing that should be with Mike's organ solo isn't because Hugh and I are somewhere else. The idea, after all, is not to create four pieces of music but one piece of music, and I'm upset on nights when we create four pieces of music."

So what have you gained musically from the Symbiosis? "Since the summer, since I've started playing with Kevin, I've realised that in other contexts there are things in me which come out and never seem to come out when I play with Soft Machine. It's not a question of quality at all, it's just a question of different situations demand different skills, and I hadn't realised just how much you do adapt and just play what seems necessary. I would be very loath to put a word to it and think of a concept which fits what I mean.

"All I know is that when I get on a kit, and there's Roy Babbington on me left and whoever it might be, Neville Whitehead or someone, and Gary [*Windo*] and Nick [*Evans*], that a whole different thing happens. I just lift up me sticks and immediately something else happens and different situations arise that would never arise with Soft Machine. I just play completely different things.


Wyatt: "There's an element of childishness in jazz"

GEMS/GETTY IMAGES

"Symbiosis is different people. All music is a cooperative thing, you see. Beyond all people's individual talent is a shared talent, which the music has. How to pin down the best relationship... European music sort of solidified in a way into an almost military hierarchy of composer, conductor and orchestra.

"What happens is, there's a kind of assumption that the type of person who conceives the music is a different kind of person from a performer – that's what European music assumes, although many great European composers have been virtuoso performers of their own work, and many great composers are great conductors. But generally speaking, this is a hierarchy that's accepted, and the fact is that in my opinion the most vital influence on music has been the black music of the past 50 years.

"The most interesting thing it seems to me, that has been suggested by black music, is that, as in, say, painting, the person who conceives of it and the person who plays it can be one and the same – combine both skills in one person. And this seems to me the most interesting, challenging thing that jazz music has come up with that European music doesn't really like to get to grips with. And what Symbiosis is, is a complete imbalance; in other words, we're all blowers without any of the composers, or when we do have composers – like Keith was with us the other night – he's not in a composing or controlling role at all.

"And so it's an incredible risk, Symbiosis every night, because we just turn up and play. The responsibility is enormous; you've got to be on form then and there because you're going to be doing all the composing and all the performing at the same time, and so is everybody else."

Would you agree that this seems to be a very interesting period for young jazz musicians and the thinking rock musicians? They really seem to be coming together. "Well, Centipede is directly responsible for Symbiosis and so on. Yeah, I think so. For me, I find it staggering, and a bit scary, because it seems to me there's so much to do and so little to hide behind.

"There's a lot of knowledge and wisdom that's been spread around in the last four or five years. There's no excuse for certain types of musicians not knowing about other types. The standards are so high now! And the area of information you are expected to cope with! I think there's bound to be a lot of messy stuff of journalistic interest – interesting but disposable – but I think it's incredibly exciting. Short answer to your question – yes."

What do you think jazz people can learn from those musicians with rock references? "That's interesting. Before I talk about it I think that if you think of it as a blanket thing you're in trouble; a band created out of generalised theories sounds like one to me, always. And a band made out of people who've met and work together well

Softs parade: (l-r) Mike Ratledge, Hugh Hopper, Robert Wyatt and Elton Dean in 1970

sounds like that as well. There can be as much difference in worlds between two so-called rock musicians working together, they can bring more completely different things to each other than a rock musician and a classical musician.

“If there are any general things, I think they’re the obvious ones. Jazz musicians are now realising that there’s nothing mature about consistently drowning out your bass player and pianist. There’s nothing childish about getting your bass player and pianist heard, even if it means they have to play crude instruments such as bass guitar and electric piano. There’s nothing essentially immoral or immature about it. The fact that rock musicians assume that you’ve got to hear the bass line – although very often they overdo it – seems to me an actual element of musical maturity in rock. There’s an element of childishness in jazz. There’s an assumption that jazz musicians can do all the teaching and rock musicians all the learning.

“If the soloist, for instance, is doing a development upon a harmonic sequence and you can’t hear the harmonic sequence, so you don’t know what the solo lines are referring to, then you lose the point of reference; you lose the lovely cosmic hum, if you’ll pardon the expression; you lose the sense of well-being, you lose, actually, the music, and you just leave the ideas. It’s an important thing in rock, the amplifiers and that, and instead of being rude about them, I think jazz musicians are realising more and more that they’ve got a very important function and that they’re solving problems that can’t be solved in any other way in the immediate future.

“And I think rock musicians can learn from jazz musicians. The most important thing they learn is that you can get a lot more out of music and put a lot more into it if you learn to play properly. Quite simply, jazz musicians are showing rock musicians that there’s an awful lot of things you can do on a guitar and drum kits that aren’t unnecessary or just technical fiddle bits – they just expand your language.

“In practice, most jazz musicians tend to me to be very involved in what they play – actually, the relationship between them and their instrument; and they’ve developed that to a very high extent – a man and his bass, a man and his alto, a man and his piano. And what rock has spent a lot more time doing than most of jazz is studying the actual effect and balance of what all these instruments sound like from the outside on a stage.”

What do you think your strengths are as a drummer? “Well, I suppose it’s a bit late to say this, but I don’t primarily think of myself as a drummer. I think of myself as a catalyst for the real musicians. How I see myself being most useful is getting people at it slightly more than if I wasn’t there, or even getting them together and at it. If I was really into drums as an end I’d be sitting here practising. But I haven’t got a practice pad! So long as I can play well enough to pin down what’s going on and to emphasise the pace that’s necessary.

“From the technical point of view I’m just nowhere, really. I’ve always felt a bit uncomfortable since we started. Basically, I came up to London to sing songs with Kevin [*Ayers*]. Five, six years ago. I’d done a lot of things before then that were instrumental, but by instrumental I don’t mean jazz or rock. In fact, the funny way these discussions come to jazz and rock is that I don’t see them as the two great sources from which musicians are drawing.

“A lot of my richest sources of inspiration come from not one musical idiom or the other but from paintings, and theatre and people’s characteristics that you haven’t seen come through in music.”

But everybody is affected to a greater or lesser extent by every experience they encounter. Didn’t you once tell me you’d learnt a lot by being told by Robert Graves, the poet, to leave home at 16 and make your own way in the world? “Well, I lived with him in Majorca for a while, and he became my Mediterranean father in a way. He’s happy to have me there, and I hadn’t left school when I first went there, but he didn’t want me to loaf about in the sun and just have a nice time and groove, which is virtually the state he’s got to now, because he has the traditional attitude that he’s done his homework, built up something, and now he’s out in the sun finishing it off, so to speak.

“I hadn’t earned it yet, somehow, and though there was great love abounding it wasn’t one which had to be constantly backed up by me being there all the time or him coming here, just that he felt I had to go out and do it, and then when I’d got something that I’d done, maybe go back and see him again. And I haven’t been back yet because I don’t feel I’ve done anything yet that would stand up to his kind of standards.”

So how did the tie-up with Graves originate? “There’s a bunch of friends there in the early ’30s who’d gone out there – poets and writers – and their children, their grandchildren, got invited out there by the people who stayed on there – you know, the children of the people who went back to England during the war. And I’m one of them. He’s no relation, though my father’s first wife was his secretary.

“There’s a kind of family of thinkers that my parents belonged to, and to a certain extent Robert Graves could be called the head of that family. He’s a kind of distant tribal chief, though it’s several generations removed. He had various fights with me dad, who died some years ago. My father at that time, he was a sort of brilliant young Communist layabout, really [*laughs*].

“He’d done various things. He’d got a degree in law at Liverpool, and then he did modern languages at Oxford, and then he got on to do psychology at Cambridge. A very bright bloke.

“He lived just long enough to realise that I wasn’t going into university, which really disappointed him. He died in a state of anger at me, I’m afraid. But he was also a pianist, and that’s definitely where I got my ideas from. The house was full of music.

“And Graves, he’s incredible. There’s a colony, a set, around him there. Mind you, I’m talking about when I was there, which was before The Soft Machine. I’ve got lots of friends who have gone back there. Kevin spent some time there. He got into Majorca as a place to live much more than I did.”

So when you came up to London you were going to sing with Kevin? “Yes, I think that was the idea; I didn’t really know. I’d been through a period in my head very much like the stuff I’m doing now, although not technically, probably. The music I was listening to – had been listening to – was Sunny Murray, Milford Graves and Cecil Taylor, essentially. And Eric Dolphy, and Elvin Jones, of course. And I arrived at the point where I decided the simplicity of Kevin’s songs, and the rightness and charm of them, had a fantastic appeal to me after a couple of years of Sunny Murraying and freak-out. And I’m now, I think, at a similar stage. I’m likely now to get into the stage that Chris Spedding has been through on his album. I haven’t heard it, but what he’s said about it I recognise, and I think a lot of us do.

“In fact, it’s becoming a long syndrome in music – people going from complexity to simplicity. But I still feel very lost, actually. Sometimes I’m back where I started six years ago. I’ve to go through the cycle all over again now.” ●

PICTORIAL PRESS LTD / ALAMY

CARAVAN

From the Canterbury crucible comes an unserious but highly dextrous unit, out of step but always in time. If they could do it again? They still are! *By Paul Moody*

CANTERBURY, APRIL 6, 1968. For the hundred or so regulars squeezed into The Beehive Club at 52 Dover Street, the rangy figure at the front of the stage with the aquiline features and flowing ginger locks looked strikingly familiar.

Still just 21, Pye Hastings was already a fixture in a febrile music scene that had seen local heroes Soft Machine become the darlings of the UK underground over the previous six months.

However, this debut performance under the name Caravan – taken from the Duke Ellington tune – marked a radical change of direction. Dispensing with the renditions of jazz, soul and R&B standards they'd relied on in previous outfit The Wilde Flowers, the charismatic Hastings and fellow band members Richard Sinclair (bass), David Sinclair (organ) and drummer Richard Coughlan – all casually dressed in flowing shirts and flared jeans – delivered three sets of original material laced with both a quirky pop sensibility and a sense of civic pride, encapsulated in standout track "A Place Of My Own".

"The gig went down really well, considering it was our first chance to try out our own compositions on the public," recalls Hastings today. "Naturally, we loved it. The feeling was that we had something different."

It was the beginning of a journey that would take Hastings and the various incarnations of Caravan from this sleepy Kent backwater to stadium tours of America and the brink of stardom, all while exhibiting an eclectic array of influences that ran counter to pop orthodoxy.

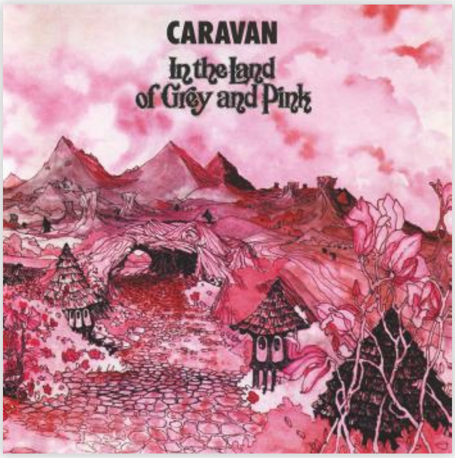
Where rock'n'roll was traditionally the sound of the city, drawing its creative energy from the streets, Caravan's music – inspired by Anglican church music, jazz, folk and classical as much as soul and R&B – tapped into a more meditative tradition, as divorced from reality as Oliver Postgate's creations during the period in nearby Blean – *Bagpuss*, *Ivor The Engine* and *Noggin The Nog*.

"I think the best definition is Robert Wyatt's, which I heard from his own lips a couple of years ago at the University of Kent," says the band's viola player, Geoff Richardson, today. "Canterbury in the '60s was like the Galápagos Islands, where due to its isolation from the rest of the evolving world, strange things evolved unlike anywhere else."

Much like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Caravan's story involves a rolling cast of characters and more than its fair share of bawdiness. The son of a professional banker in the Bank of India (his mother's father had been a police commissioner in India in the days of the Raj), Pye Hastings' musical

➢

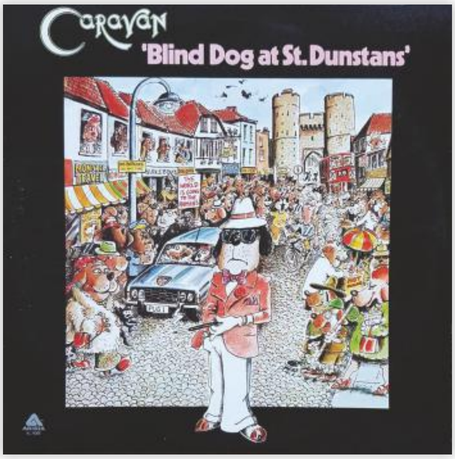
DECCA
CARAVAN
if i could do it all over again i'd do it all over you


CARAVAN
In the Land of Grey and Pink

CARAVAN
WATERLOO LILY
DERAM

CARAVAN
plump in the night
LONDON

Caravan
Cunning Stunts


Caravan
'Blind Dog at St. Dunstans'

CARAVAN
BETTER BY FAR

CARAVAN
DECCA, 1968
8/10

IF I COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN, I'D DO IT ALL OVER YOU
DECCA, 1970
7/10

IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK
DECCA, 1971
9/10

WATERLOO LILY
DECCA, 1972
5/10

FOR GIRLS WHO GROW PLUMP IN THE NIGHT
DECCA, 1973
7/10

CUNNING STUNTS
DECCA, 1975
7/10

BLIND DOG AT ST DUNSTANS
BTM, 1976
6/10

BETTER BY FAR
ARISTA, 1977
5/10

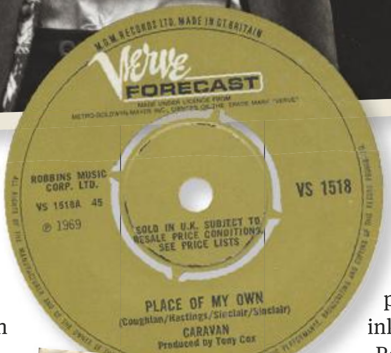
Wonder and whimsy: (l-r) Richard Coughlan, Richard Sinclair, Pye Hastings and Dave Sinclair, 1968

education began while he was still at Pilgrim Boarding School in Lydden, 10 miles outside the city.

Having gravitated towards the avant-garde local music scene based at nearby Wellington House, he made friends with a teenage Robert Wyatt – already a gifted drummer – who had been taken under the wing of the Wyatt family's lodger, a 21-year-old Australian called Daevid Allen. A blond-haired poet who had stayed in Allen Ginsberg's room at The Beat Hotel in Paris and owned a suitcase of records that pushed all artistic boundaries (Thelonious Monk, Stockhausen, Bartok, Spike Milligan), Allen acted as an artistic lightning rod, encouraging Hastings, school friend Kevin Ayers and an angelic-looking guitarist from the local secondary modern called Richard Sinclair with their musical endeavours, resulting in Hastings making his stage debut with the scene's de facto band, The Wilde Flowers, in Margate in June 1966.

Eager to start their own group in the wake of Allen, Wyatt and Ayers' decision to form Soft Machine – who had used their atonal free-jazz experiments to achieve national notoriety – Hastings and Sinclair recruited fellow Wilde Flower Dave Sinclair (Richard's cousin) and drummer Richard Coughlan to form Caravan in January 1968, determined to emulate their friends' success.

Living on a diet of Marmite and Weetabix at their shared house at 7 Westgate Terrace in Whitstable – and using equipment loaned to them by Soft Machine while they were on tour in America with Jimi Hendrix – their connections saw them land a gig at influential central London psych haunt Middle Earth, where they were spotted by music publishing executive Ian Ralfini.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VS 1518
SOLD IN U.K. SUBJECT TO RESALE PRICE CONDITIONS SEE PRICE LISTS
PLACE OF MY OWN
(Coughlan/Hastings/Sinclair/Sinclair)
CARAVAN
Produced by Tony Cox

IF I COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN
I'D DO IT ALL OVER YOU
M 35265
Super Stereo Sound
CARAVAN
HELLO HELLO

With Tolkien-centric whimsy suddenly all the rage, Caravan signed to MGM/Verve on seven pounds a week, symbolically inking the deal at The Beehive. Released in October 1968, their debut album showcased Hastings' uncanny ability to harness Canterbury's choral tradition with the spirit of the age, the band's wide-eyed sense of wonder made manifest in nine-minute epic "Where But For Caravan Would I".

With an enthusiastic John Peel providing radio support, Caravan seemed to be on the fast-track to stardom. However, Verve's decision to close down its UK operation without warning threw the first of many spanners in the works, leaving the band label-less until February 1970, when they signed to Decca's psychedelic offshoot, Deram.

> **"Dave and Richard Sinclair leaving at such a critical time was definitely a blow," says Pye Hastings today**

Despite its suggestive title track earning the band an appearance on *Top Of The Pops*, their second album, *If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You*, released in September 1970, jarred horribly with a zeitgeist where '60's utopianism had given way to a harsher '70s reality.

In the same month where Black Sabbath's proto-metal anthem "Paranoid" was causing youthquakes across the country, whimsical ditties such as "And I Wish I Were Stoned" already felt like museum pieces from another era.

With his ego bruised and conscious that both Richard and Dave Sinclair had stockpiled material, Hastings took a backseat for the band's next album, 1971's *In The Land Of Grey And Pink*.

While innuendo-laden songs such as "Golf Girl" played up to the Canterbury stereotype of their hometown as a stoned version of Frodo's Shire, it was "Nine Feet Underground" that established the band as a force to be reckoned with. A mesmerising, 22-minute opus in eight parts written in their keyboardist's basement, it showcased Dave Sinclair as every inch the equal of prog-rock rivals Keith Emerson and Rick Wakeman.

When the album again failed to chart, the keyboardist – already exasperated by the band's parlous financial state – decided to quit. Having recruited Steve Miller to take Sinclair's place, continuing tensions between Hastings and Richard Sinclair during the recording of 1972's more jazz-oriented *Waterloo Lily* saw the latter also leave the band to join Delivery – who would later mutate into Hatfield And The North.

"Dave and Richard Sinclair leaving the band at such a critical time in our careers was definitely a blow," says Hastings today. "Some would say a killer blow. But looking back, it presented itself as an exciting opportunity to reform and take the band in a different direction. I never would have given up, and I didn't."

With Caravan having seemingly ground to a halt, an unlikely jump-start came when, during auditions for a new bassist, Hastings chanced upon 22-year-old viola player Geoff Richardson (formerly of Winchester prog outfit Red Acid).

Sharing both Hastings' smutty sense of humour and influences (Miles Davis, Frank Zappa and King Crimson), the newly recruited Richardson found himself getting a crash course in the rock'n'roll lifestyle on a tour of Australia and New Zealand alongside Slade, Status Quo and Lindisfarne in February 1973.

"In Melbourne, I went to the hotel gym to use the sauna only to find that it'd been wrecked by the apparently normally mellow members of Lindisfarne," he recalls.

"It was my first experience of very large crowds, and in retrospect, I don't think we got a great reaction. However, we were soon to start playing the big UK festivals to great effect."

With the band toughened up by this bruising experience, Caravan's next album, *For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night*, was a grittier affair, typified by show-stopping live favourite "Hoedown".

With the band's upward trajectory confirmed by 1974's well-received orchestral live album *Caravan & The New Symphonia*, they received a further boost when big-league manager Miles Copeland – son of one of the founders of the CIA – took the

The *Better By Far* lineup, 1977: (l–r) Geoff Richardson, Coughlan, Hastings, Jan Schelhaas and Dek Messecar

(Below, l–r) Dave Sinclair, Richardson, Coughlan, Hastings and John G Perry in the *Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night* lineup, 1973

band on, vowing to break them in America.

Copeland immediately booked the band on a coast-to-coast tour of the States in September 1974, supporting everyone from Fleetwood Mac to Fairport Convention.

With the wind in their sails, there were high hopes for their sixth album,titled (for fans of lewd spoonerism) *Cunning Stunts*.

"It's the punchline to a joke Richard Coughlan was fond of telling," recalls Richardson. "What's the difference between a policeman's truncheon and a magician's wand?' One is for cunning stunts… What can I say? Pye is vulgar, he can't help himself."

Despite the album's comparative success – it reached No 50 – Caravan's inability to take themselves too seriously (a heinous crime in prog rock circles) became ever clearer during a performance at that year's Reading Festival. As the band left their stage prior to the encore, their road crew displayed their naked buttocks to the crowd, spelling out the album's title on their backsides – a display of bare-faced cheek that made the national press.

While the presence of legendary producer Tony Visconti at the helm for 1976's *Blind Dog At St Dunstans* did little to improve its commercial performance – it only reached No 53 – Caravan were still living high on the hog, having signed a new deal with Arista. After the final gig of their second US tour in Long Island, the band jumped in a helicopter where they drank champagne en route to JFK. On their return to Heathrow, they were met by Arista's blue Rolls-Royce, which whisked them back to Canterbury.

"At the time, Canterbury High Street was still open to two-way traffic," recalls Richardson with a grin. "We made the driver take us up and down as many times as possible to demonstrate our new status."

By 1977, however, such shameless decadence felt as out of touch as Caravan looked on the sleeve of the next album, *Better By Far* – enjoying a banquet while dressed in white tuxedos.

Dropped by manager Miles Copeland in a punk-inspired purge of his roster – it was also the career death knell for Wishbone Ash, Curved Air, Renaissance and The Climax Blues Band – Caravan suddenly found themselves on rock's hard shoulder.

The sense that they had become as culturally relevant as the dinosaurs was brought home to Richardson when he was invited to join The Damned on stage at a gig at The Music Machine in Camden later the same year.

"Captain Sensible introduced me by saying, 'We've got a real live hippy here with us from Caravan,'" he recalls. "It was as if overnight we'd become relics from a bygone era."

While Caravan's fanbase didn't disappear overnight, any hopes of joining the stadium superleague were over. Having split up at the tail end of 1977, by the time of the band's one-off reformation for a TV show in 1990, Hastings was working as a labourer at a construction company run by a friend of Richard Coughlan.

"It was the best therapy in the world," he later recalled. "Every blow with a four-pound club hammer was landing on the imaginary head of some poor bugger who I felt had done me wrong."

Today, however, Hastings is sanguine about Caravan's failure to hit the heights of their prog rock peers.

"We loved Yes and Genesis and ELP. The difference between us all was that they had good singles and we didn't."

While the band's members are now scattered across the globe – Dave Sinclair in Tokyo, Hastings in Scotland and Richard Sinclair in Italy (Richard Coughlan sadly died in 2013) – the brilliance and mind-boggling musicality of their back catalogue lives on – a touchstone for outfits ranging from King Gizzard And The Lizard Wizard to Syd Arthur.

Currently touring around a nucleus of Hastings and Richardson, Hastings' desire to spread the Canterbury gospel remains as strong as it did back on stage at The Beehive on that heady night in April 1968.

"Fifty years later we are still playing and enjoying it more than ever, and prog music seems to be having a resurgence worldwide, so what's not to like?" he says in conclusion. "I will carry on until I write something that I am completely happy with. I haven't got there yet."

These Canterbury Tales aren't finished yet. ●

GONG

O mother, don't do it again! A cosmic joker blasts off from Planet Gong into colourful, absurdist new universes of sound. *By Jon Dale*

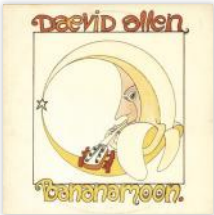
DOWN to their very core, French-British-Australian prog group Gong were deeply silly. At their peak, in the early-to-mid 1970s, Gong was basically a grown man leading a troupe of musicians into an imagined world of surrealist adventure, full of Pothead Pixies, Octave Doctors and other dippy-trippy stuff. But they were deep, too: their intention, ultimately, was nothing less than to bring about their audience's psycho-spiritual awakening. If other prog bands could get a bit too portentous, Gong's humour and lightness of touch was a welcome reprieve, and offered yet another take on prog's multifaceted aesthetic.

Gong amplified the whimsy of the early Canterbury scene and added a kind of spiritual illumination drawn from Dadaism and pataphysics, populist mysticism, and the socio-cultural turbulence of their times. Part of a number of scenes, but somehow existing out on their own, Gong's tale is one of communes and the cosmos, jams and jazz, "floating anarchy" and freaked-out fusions – nothing less than the interplanetary and outerplanetary travels of the expanded mind. It took them to some pretty weird places, but one impressive thing about Gong is just how much they did – the group churned out plenty of albums across the 1970s, toured a whole lot, and generally spread their message of anarchic goofball wisdom with great gusto. The end result is a body of work that takes some time to navigate, but yields continual rewards. It's a mission that Gong pursue, on and off, to this day.

At the centre of it all was Australian transplant Daevid Allen. A peripatetic figure, he turns up at odd moments elsewhere in the prog story – as a founding member of The Soft Machine; through connections with Caravan – his position as the English beatnik-hippie's beatnik-hippie guaranteed by his friendship with William Burroughs and Terry Riley, and his involvement with the May '68 protests in France. Allen cottoned on to the seductive power of absurdity early in his life, figuring out that playing the holy fool allowed him to sneak past the squares: "Behind a smoke screen of silliness, the cosmic joker could infiltrate anywhere while teaching unhindered the 'heresy' of gutsy spiritual transformation."

It was his French connection, though, that really got things moving. An early lineup of Gong appeared playing in Stockholm in early 1968 alongside Don Cherry, with luminaries like Yoko Ono and Ornette Coleman checking out their gigs. But Gong really first materialised on the counterculture's collective radar thanks to their debut album, 1969's *Magick Brother*, released on the French label BYG, which ➢

daevid allen
gilli smyth
gong
actuel
5


Daevid allen
Bananamoon

bande originale du film de J. LAPERROUSAZ
CONTINENTAL CIRCUS
musique par GONG avec DAEVID ALLEN

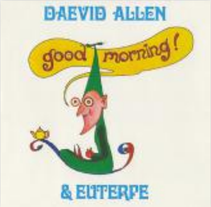
ANGELS EGG
GONG

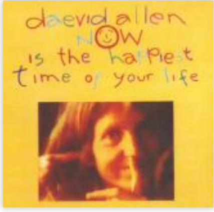
camembert electrique
FROM THE PLANET
GONG
STRONG and STREAMIN mate!
FABRIQUÉ EN NORMANDIE

GONG
Shamal

STEVE HILLAGE
FISH RISING

GONG
GAZEUSE!


DAEVID ALLEN
good morning!
& EUTERPE


daevid allen
NOW
is the happiest time of your life

STEVE HILLAGE
MOTIVATION RADIO

GONG
EST MORT
VIVE GONG

PLANET
GONG
LIVE
FLOATING ANARCHY
1977

GONG
MAGICK BROTHER
BYG, 1969
8/10

DAEVID ALLEN
BANANA MOON
BYG, 1971
8/10

GONG
CAMEMBERT ELECTRIQUE
BYG, 1971
9/10

DASHIELL HEDAYAT & GONG
OBSOLETE
SHANDAR, 1971
8/10

GONG AVEC DAEVID ALLEN
CONTINENTAL CIRCUS PHILIPS, 1972
7/10

GONG
FLYING TEAPOT (RADIO GNOME INVISIBLE VOL. 1)
VIRGIN, 1973
8/10

GONG
ANGEL'S EGG (RADIO GNOME INVISIBLE VOL. 2)
VIRGIN, 1973
8/10

GONG
YOU (RADIO GNOME INVISIBLE VOL. 3)
VIRGIN, 1974
7/10

GONG
SHAMAL
VIRGIN, 1975
6/10

STEVE HILLAGE
FISH RISING
VIRGIN, 1975
6/10

PIERRE MOERLEN'S GONG
GAZEUSE!
VIRGIN, 1976
5/10

STEVE HILLAGE
L
VIRGIN, 1976
6/10

DAEVID ALLEN & EUTERPE
GOOD MORNING!
VIRGIN, 1976
6/10

DAEVID ALLEN
NOW IS THE HAPPIEST TIME OF YOUR LIFE
AFFINITY, 1977
7/10

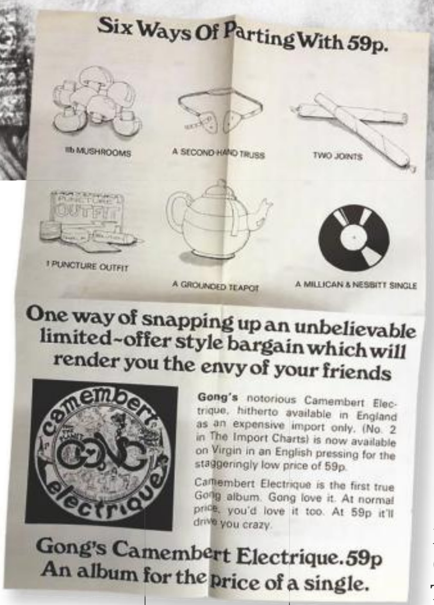
STEVE HILLAGE
MOTIVATION RADIO
VIRGIN, 1977
6/10

GONG
LIVE ETC.
VIRGIN, 1977
7/10

GONG
GONG EST MORT, VIVE GONG
TAPIOCA, 1977
7/10

PLANET GONG
LIVE FLOATING ANARCHY 1977
LTM, 1978
7/10

"Behind a smokescreen of silliness…": Gong circa 1974 – (l–r) Laurie Allan, Didier Malherbe, Tim Blake, Stevie Dunn, Daevid Allen, Steve Hillage and Miquette Giraudy


1lb MUSHROOMS
A SECOND-HAND TRUSS
TWO JOINTS
1 PUNCTURE OUTFIT
A GROUNDED TEAPOT
A MILLICAN & NESBITT SINGLE
camembert electrique
GONG

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Gong's notorious Camembert Electrique, hitherto available in England as an expensive import only. (No. 2 in The Import Charts) is now available on Virgin in an English pressing for the staggeringly low price of 59p.

Camembert Electrique is the first true Gong album. Gong love it. At normal price, you'd love it too. At 59p it'll drive you crazy.

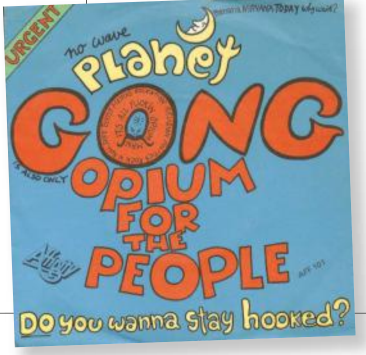
Gong's Camembert Electrique. 59p
An album for the price of a single.

was connected to the magazine *Actuel*, and deep in the zone with Paris's bustling free jazz scene. With prog still in its developmental stages, *Magick Brother* was an extension of early Soft Machine's psych-pop whimsy and playfulness, with an added, spacier dimension.

Indeed, throughout the album, there are great pop gems, and Allen certainly had some facility with catchy melody – even if he'd eventually drop that for Gong's extended space-prog jams. *Magick Brother* also introduced the witchy "space whisper" of collaborator and Allen's partner, Gilli Smyth. During this time, Gong were living as a gang in a country house out near Fontainebleu, in France, sorting out their trip, getting together with two managers and starting to develop the cosmology that would help elevate some of their greatest music. An Allen solo album, *Banana Moon*, followed suit in 1971, recorded when Allen returned to England briefly, reuniting with Robert Wyatt and paying homage to old friend Kevin Ayers with the affected plummy baritone of "White Neck Blooze".

1971 was a busy year for Gong. Once Allen was back in France, the group embarked on a number of projects. They backed poet Dashielle Hedayat on his oft-overlooked but beautiful album *Obsolete*, a stunning, longform set of improvisations. They also recorded a fine mini-album soundtrack for *Continental Circus*, a documentary about motorcycle rider Jack Findlay. Most importantly, though, the group laid down their first classic, *Camembert Electrique*. With a team of sympathetic musicians on board – Pip Pyle, Shakti Yoni (aka Gilli Smyth), Bloomdido Bad De Grass (aka Didier Malherbe), The Submarine Captain (aka Christian Tritsch), with Allen as Dingo Virgin or Bert Camembert – they finally got the collective Gong magic on tape: almost 50 years later, this still plays as their strongest set, the most potent collection of psych-space-prog-rock-pop playfulness they ever recorded.

Part of what makes it compelling is how rough'n'ready it all sounds. "You Can't Kill Me" oscillates around a cyclical, driving riff that slams into the ground as a sax rudely blurts and blasts its way onto the tapes. "I've Been Stone Before" follows, a drowsy anti-hymn, a church organ preset plotting the chords while Allen leers and swoops the melody across the top. On "O Mother", the repetitive "*don't do it again*" seems to wink at The Soft Machine's "We Did It Again" riff-machine; "I Am Your Fantasy" loses itself in a wash of space whisper and trip-flip-out meditations. Throughout, the group unpin the songs, let them loose from their moorings. It's a total trip, a plenitude of space-rock wildness, miniaturised psych-prog operas, interstellar noise interference, and some soaring, searing fuzzed-out guitar venom from Allen on songs like "Fohat Digs Holes In Space".



By now, Allen was also injecting his signature "glissando guitar" into the Gong sound, a warbly, tinnitus-ring drone he created by "glissing" the strings of the guitar with a metal rod (apparently, handles of surgical implements were particularly good tools). It makes his guitar sound hypnotic, as though it's playing itself, drifting on eternally, hovering somewhere out there in the ether. The group's creativity felt endless at this point, as though there were no limits to their possibilities; but the truth of the matter was, Gong were in trouble, with various members coming and going, record label uncertainty, and Allen feeling pretty much as though he was on his last legs.

Help came from Simon Draper of Virgin Records, who made Gong one of the label's first signings, alongside German group Faust, and a young kid named Mike Oldfield. With the support of an independent label who were in the business of thinking big, Gong entered their imperial phase. Around this time, the group also met Steve Hillage, a guitarist who'd been a part of early proggers Archazel, and who'd led Khan for a year or so. Hillage was the final piece of the Gong puzzle, the person who'd help to pull it all together, allowing the group to make their now-legendary Radio Gnome Invisible trilogy.

By now, Gong were fully settled in their Fontainebleu commune and ready to get to work on their "magnum opus". Allen was using Gong to plot out his visions, realising his desire to impart the wisdom he'd accrued from years of inner and outer exploration. If it comes across as slightly cult-ish, well, there was definitely a risk it could all look that way, but thankfully, Gong's trademark humour undoes any

ONG
Virgin Records

The *Shamal* lineup, 1976: (l-r) Sandy Colley, Patrice Lemoine, Mireille Bauer, Pierre Moerlen, Mike Howlett, Jorge Pinchevsky, Didier Malherbe

overthinking, any abject seriousness. So, instead of reams of theory and didactic, obscurantist proclamations, Radio Gnome Invisible told the story of Planet Gong, a projection of an ideal Earth, through the wanderings of cartoon-ish characters like Zero The Hero, whose travels have him encountering the Pot Head Pixies, the Octave Doctors, teapot vendors, the “*great beer yogi*”, and more, in a loosely mapped quest for knowledge and transformation.

Was it ridiculous? Undoubtedly. Was it compelling? That depends on your fondness for absurdism. But there’s certainly something deeply fun going on with these outer-space radio broadcasts from Radio Gnome Invisible, “a telepathic pirate radio network operating brain-to-brain by crystal machine transmitter”. The first such broadcast, 1973’s *Flying Teapot*, benefits both from Hillage’s contributions and the space-chamber bliss-outs of synth player Tim Blake. Some of the caustic edge of *Camembert Electrique* is gone, but it’s replaced by a joyously free, open-armed anarchy that sometimes cohered into surprisingly disciplined jams, like the epic ride that is “Flying Teapot”, which shifts from a fluid jazziness to the hilariously British chant, “*Have a cup of tea, have another one, ’ave a cuppa tea*”.

The tea was spiked, clearly. By the time of “Witch’s Song/I Am Your Pussy”, Smyth is swoon-breathing into your ears, promising to “*cover you with a warm, dark mothering, fill you with an animal love, carry you away in the sky*”, before her maniacal laughter lifts the song into a clattering, lackadaisical groove, Hillage’s wah guiding it with an incipient funk. Smyth calls you back to the world at the beginning of the second part of the trilogy, 1973’s *Angels Egg*: “*She is the mother of everything, and you are her egg*”. Here, Gong stretch things yet further, Allen’s goof-mystic pronouncements adrift in a sea of drone and space blues, while songs like “Sold To The Highest Buddha” invent what feels like, oddly enough, a kind of space-rock/prog-jam/music-hall genre mash-up. “Castle In The Clouds” is a beautiful example of Hillage’s liquid multiplex guitar playing, spiralling out speed-freak arpeggios that get caught up in the twists and turns of a delay pedal.

Angels Egg may not be the best album in the trilogy, but it’s probably the best entry point, simply as it tries to do so much: built from short snippets of spacey meditations, whimsical prog tunes, percussive toy-pattern minimalism, and some Canterbury-esque driftsongs, with Smyth’s “space whisper” and Allen’s colloquial pataphysics ever-present, it’s a lovely album where everyone’s playing sympathetically, fully inhabiting the Gong universe. If it all sounds kind of bonkers-visionary, that’s because, well, it is, but it’s an absolute blast.

By the following year’s *You*, though, the balance in the group had shifted towards the more muso Pierre Moerlen, and the result is the beginnings of a streamlined, fluid jazz-rock: the surrealism is dumped, replaced with rutting musicianship. There are a few lovely moments, but Allen’s getting bored, and indeed, this would be his last ’70s album with Gong; Hillage left soon after, only guesting on 1975’s jazz-rock stumbler *Shamal*.

Camembert Electrique is the most potent set of psych-space-prog-rock-pop playfulness they ever recorded

Virgin
Stereo
V 2031
V-2031-A
Side One
“FISH RISING”/STEVE HILLAGE
INGLID/INVOLUTION
1. SOLAR MUSICK SUITE (16.56)
1. Sun Song (I Love Its Holy Mystery) (6.15) 2. Canterbury Sunrise (3.25)
3. Hiram Afterglid Meets The Dervish (4.05)
4. Sun Song (Reprise) (3.10)
2. FISH (1.23)
3. MEDITATION OF THE SNAKE (3.10)
Composed and arranged by Steve Hillage
Lyrics by Steve Hillage and Miquette Giraudy
Published by Virgin Music (Publishers) Ltd
Produced by Simon Heyworth & Steve Hillage
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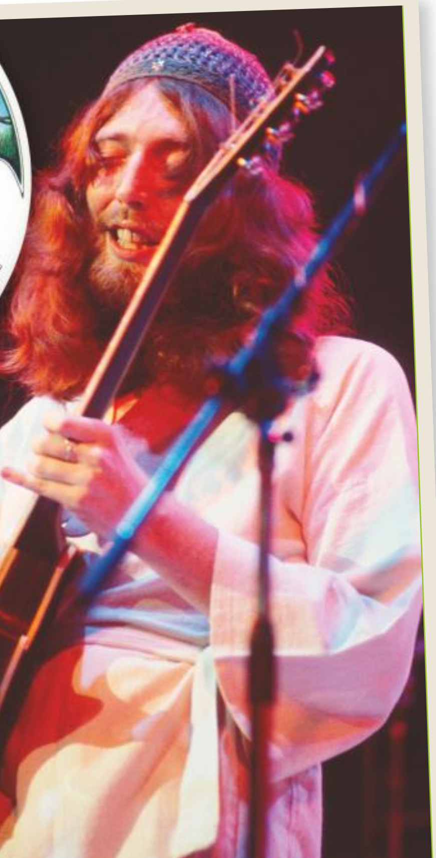
℗ 1975 Virgin Records Ltd



(Below) Steve Hillage solo, supporting the Electric Light Orchestra on their North American tour, February 1977

Allen left the group in typically outlandish fashion, freaking out at a gig in Cheltenham, sensing a malign force at work and subsequently running out of the venue, hitchhiking home in full stage costume and makeup. With Pierre Moerlen subsequently installed by Virgin as the group’s new leader, Gong became a different beast, continuing down the fusty jazz-rock path – the tricksy playing and funkless grooves of 1977’s *Gazeuse!* signalled this intent. It was a betrayal of Allen’s, and Gong’s, wide-eyed wonder. You could still hear that wonder, though, if you picked up the live albums of Allen-era Gong that were released in 1977 (*Gong Est Mort*... featured a briefly reunited classic-era Gong, from the ’77 Gong Reunion showcase in Paris). Hillage went solo, with Virgin supporting him as a kind of low-rent Mike Oldfield: his first three albums (*Fish Rising*, *L* and *Motivation Radio*) feature some good songs and delightful playing, but none of it quite sparks like his work with Gong, and it wouldn’t be until 1980, and the New Age classic *Rainbow Dome Musik*, that he’d really find his métier.

And what of Allen? He and Smyth retired to Deya in Spain, sustained by royalties from French TV News’s use of Gong’s “Continental Circus” as a theme tune, and recorded a few pleasant-enough solo albums, before heading back to Britain to hook up with travelling proggers Here & Now, and their punk pals Alternative TV, going out on the road as Planet Gong for their Floating Anarchy Tour.

Gong would prove to have a hardy constitution, and would take a number of forms over the decades, Allen rejoining at some point in the ’90s, helping to pilot things until his death in 2015, while inviting groups like the similarly minded Japanese psych-rock commune Acid Mothers Temple into the extended Gong family. Indeed, Gong are still a going concern, even after both Allen and Smyth have passed, releasing a new album, *The Universe Also Collapses*, in 2019 and a boxset of Gong’s Virgin recordings, *Love From The Planet Gong*, collecting core albums and contemporaneous live material.

At this pace, Gong could go on forever, or at least until Planet Gong arrives: according to Allen’s prophecy, we’ve only got to wait until 2032. At the very least, though, we have Gong to thank for giving prog rock permission to smile, to laugh, to breathe out and take itself just that bit less seriously – all the better to bring the audience closer to having the kinds of revelatory encounters that powered Allen, all those years ago, when he was assembling the cosmology that made Gong possible. You could do much worse than to get in your glider and ride the tide with them. ●

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

“Maybe the no pot-head

Gnome-mad land: Gong in 1974 – (l–r) Steve Hillage, Gilli Smyth, Mike Howlett, Miquette Giraudy, Didier Malherbe, Daevid Allen and Pierre Moerlen

next album, pixies…"

In their spiritual home – France – **GONG** blow minds, to a pre-converted "Planet Gong" crowd. Change, however, may be on the cards. As Didier Malherbe tells Chris Salewicz, "There is a need for cleaning up…"

NME DECEMBER 21, 1974

GONG'S hotel in the Avenue De Wagram in Paris is directly opposite the Salle Wagram where they are due to gig tonight. It should take about 30 seconds from bedroom to dressing room. All in all, quite handy.

It's not necessarily going to be that handy for Daevid Allen, however. A couple of days previously, you see, he'd realised how pleasant it would be to fly down to visit a chateau in the Balearic Islands. And he obviously hadn't thought it terribly necessary to bother anyone with the trivia of his whereabouts.

Now the thing is, the various members of Gong do rather have this tendency to… to wander, would perhaps be a reasonable way of putting it.

Steve Hillage, for example, handed his key into reception immediately after checking into the hotel. Didier Malherbe has also gone missing, although it's generally believed he's visiting an uncle whose pornographic books and mistress he had once been so fond of.

The lampshade-skinned face of Tim Blake, however, has been located peering over the edge of his bedspread at a battery of ingeniously oriental mind destroyers.

Eventually he and Mike Howlett emerge to join manager and record label owner Richard Branson – out checking on the troops as it were – and tour manager Didy Brooks and myself over a late lunch in a nearby brasserie.

As the wine is being poured, a certain Mr and Mrs Bill Bruford are noticed ambling down from the direction of the Etoile Metro. Bill Bruford, late of King Crimson and Yes, is, as you are possibly aware, currently the Gong drummer.

Confusion is indubitably regnant, and whether it's Gallic or Gong reasoning it's been decided that the new arrivals should stay at the Hotel MacMahon some four blocks away.

It all takes a while to sink in. But ultimately I begin to really appreciate that the initial moving spirit of the band, Daevid Allen, is currently waiting on standby at some Spanish air terminal over a thousand kilometres away.

So I inquire of tour promoter Georges Luton, a shade hesitantly, if there is a possibility that the gig may have to be pulled out.

How fatuous of me. Not only has it not yet been decided what time the gig will begin, but there is still the minor problem that Eric Clapton is also playing Paris that night.

And this crazy Anglais thinks that just because one member of Gong might not turn up then it will be necessary to scrap the concert!

Yes, Gong and Paris blend well.

They blend with France's almost feudal, hierarchical rationale that was epitomised for history in a Reuter report to the London *Times* some months ago, stating that, "A man was today sent to prison for eight years for killing his second wife – as he did his first – because her cooking was not up to cordon bleu standard.

"The judge told Noel Carriou, aged 54, in passing sentence, that he understood good cooking was an important part of married life."

It's probably true that Paris and France – and quite possibly the world, actually – really do have a need for the Gong.

Paris is depressed and grey and, most of all, enervating. A freak heatwave lifting the temperature into the lower 60s coincides with the band's stay in the capital.

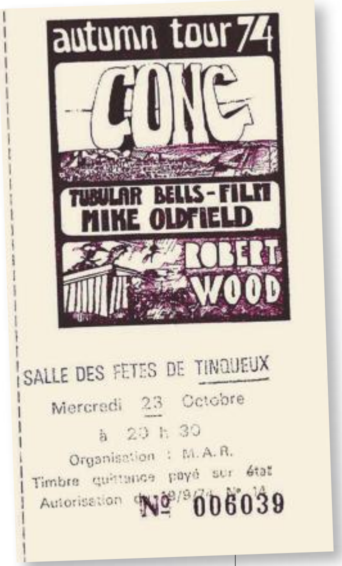
For the meantime the strikes are over – but a cab driver tells me authoritatively of impending revolution – though sinister bus-loads of CRS riot police can be seen on the move everywhere.

No-one seems to know exactly why.

The next day, Bill and Carolyn Bruford and myself play at tourists, and come across 500 police guarding the front of the Ministere Des Finances. Some seem merely impatient, others are rammed full of uprightness, while a few seem genuinely scared as they stand around waiting for a demo that, in fact, never was.

While Gong are actually on stage – yes, the gig does happen – the dressing rooms are rifled by a ratpack of switchblade-carrying *blousons noirs* – the French version of Hells Angels who are, in reality, closer to a bunch of Puerto Rican extras from *West Side Story*.

Two hundred police arrive in full battle gear to deal with them. And Gong arrive in France and sell out all their gigs and play numbers which incorporate mime and lyrics about the mythology of the Planet Gong. And the suspension of disbelief in their audiences is immediate.



autumn tour 74

GONG

TUBULAR BELLS - FILM
MIKE OLDFIELD

ROBERT WOOD

SALLE DES FETES DE TINQUEUX
Mercredi 23 Octobre
à 20 h 30
Organisation : M.A.R.
Timbre quittance payé sur état
Autorisation d[illegible]/9/74 N° 14
Nº 006039

"IF YOU THINK THE IDEA COMES BEFORE THE REAL, YOU COULD SAY POT-HEAD PIXIES COME BEFORE GONG"
DIDIER MALHERBE

Seeing God: Clapton fan Steve Hillage

"I WOULD like to go upstairs in my bathroom," smiles Didier Malherbe benignly. "Because in my bathroom I 'ave fantastic sound, you know. I would like to bring all the people who are in the Salle Wagram in my bathroom.

"Just for the solo. Because it has the perfect sound, man, for the perfect solo."

Sandwiched between the Salle Wagram and the chintzy pomposity of the Paris Habitat the Gong saxophonist and flautist is holding court in a cafe. His presence does not go unobserved by the rest of the customers. It is, one supposes, not unusual to see a Frenchman wearing a black beret. It is, though, perhaps a little odd that on top of the beret there should be two plastic fried eggs and a rasher of equally plastic bacon.

"The beret is a part of a face. It's a plane, you know?" I am told somewhat obliquely. "And if you take a swim with your beret you can pick up lots of jellyfishes.

"And if you have a beret that is solid enough you can also have some teapots landing, obviously…"

Good, good, good. We're there already. This obsession with teapots… Umm, why?

"I don't know…It's a nice one, isn't it?" And Didier points to a teapot out of which another customer has been drinking. The customer, who looks as if he should live close to Guildford, settles his bill and departs. Didier adjusts his frock coat and silk scarf and places the bacon-and-eggs beret at an even more rakish angle.

However, while we're on the subject of teapots, perhaps I could ask how long Gong will be associated with pot-head pixies?

In fact, perhaps we could discuss the whole question of the Gong mythology, as it has been whispered in my ear that one or two of the younger members of the band sincerely believe that it is becoming something of a hindrance; that not only can the music stand on its own without the mythology but that as far as the more reactionary elements of English audiences are concerned – which probably means most of them – the adventures of Radio Gnome Invisible are a positive hindrance.

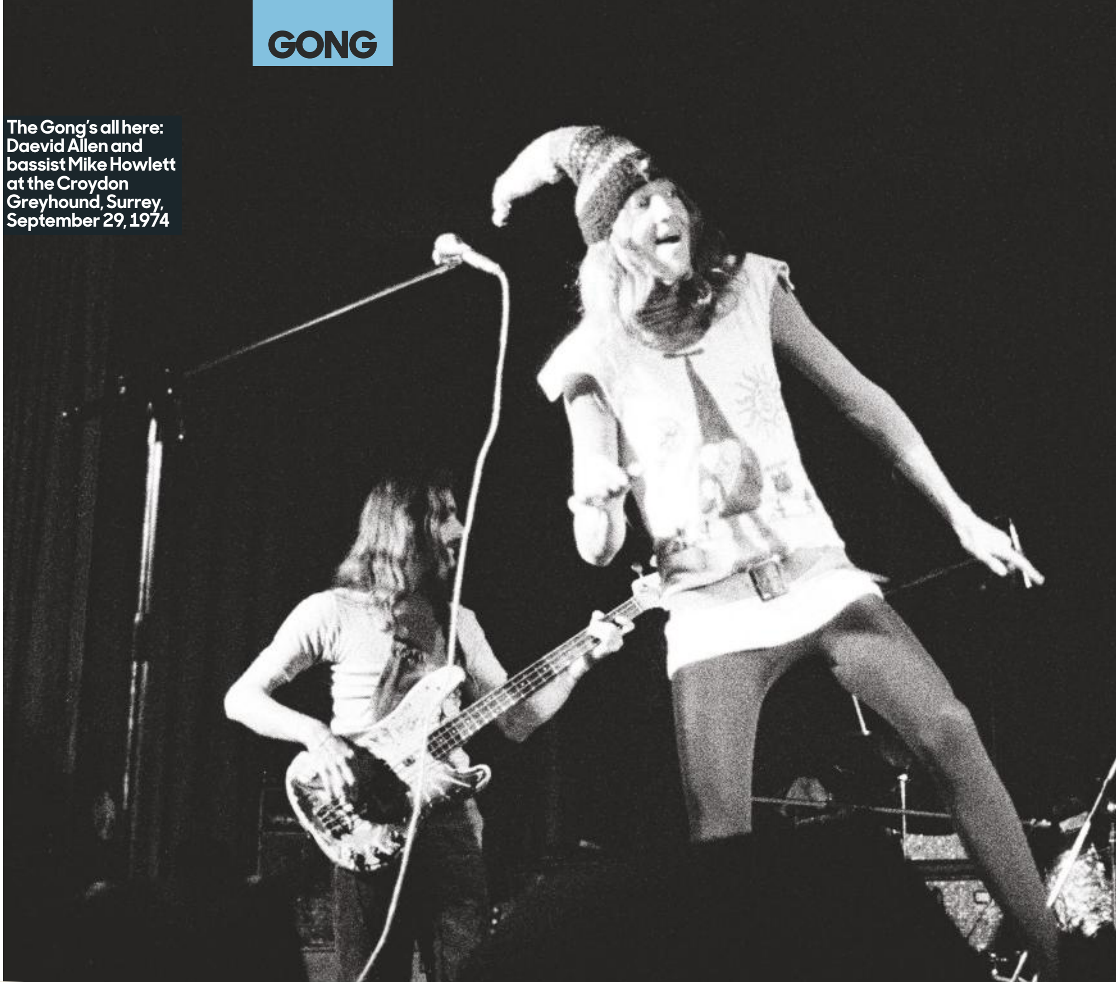
Didier shrugs his shoulders: "Well, as soon as there was a Gong mentioned there were the pot-head pixies.

"It all depends on how you look at it… If you look at it in a sort of realistic way you can say that the Gong people set up that fantasy and chose…"

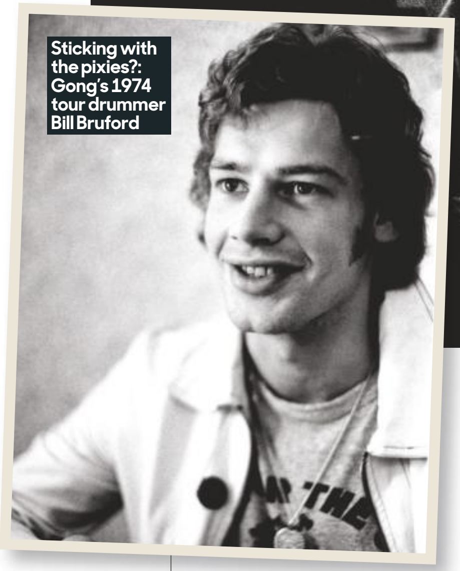
But what about it interfering with the music?

"Well, you can look at it the other way around. You can say that it's actually the Planet Gong people who are actually producing the music.

"If you think that the idea comes before the real – like Plato used to think, for example – you could say that pot-head pixies come before Gong. Or



The Gong's all here: Daevid Allen and bassist Mike Howlett at the Croydon Greyhound, Surrey, September 29, 1974



Sticking with the pixies?: Gong's 1974 tour drummer Bill Bruford

they created Gong and not Gong creating the pot-head pixies."

Yes, yes, yes. But does the music actually need the pot-head pixies?

"Well, pot-head pixies are green, and for me, in my very subjective associations, green is associated with music… And I never thought of that before I met a guy called Burton Green with whom I have recorded the first album that has my name on it.

"But to tell you a more widespread idea about the whole thing concerning that… is that Daevid himself – you know, Dingo – suggested that the next album would be completely empty of pot-head pixies. And no more relation to the mythology.

"A lot of people have been putting him down for that. I was very surprised when he said that… But maybe the next Gong album," states Didier with a sage smile, "no more pot-head pixies… No more anything of that.

"I can see that there is a need for a cleaning up, you know. But I think that in a few years time the pot-head pixies will make a reappearance. They help us a lot."

At 11.20, Daevid Allen ("aluminium croon and banana guitar") is trailing Spanish flu germs around the dressing rooms of the Salle Wagram as he shares the porcelain jar of luminous facial cream with Tim Blake and Didier Malherbe.

He mentions – in passing, as it were – how lucky he had been to get on a flight, though even after the gig Daevid appears to feel discussion of his possible non-appearance to be both unnecessary and inconsequential.

Which is almost certainly correct as it soon transpires that the concert was most in danger from guitarist Steve Hillage, who'd been almost indecently keen for Gong to knock the Paris date on the head altogether so that he could have gone off to the Parc Des Expositions to see Clapton.

Somehow, though, the gig is totally sold out, with some 300 people outside trying to blag their way in.

Bill Bruford strolls through the tatty backstage curtaining looking a little more dapper in his coney-skin coat than your standard Gong member. He strips down to his white T-shirt and jeans as the sound of Tim Blake's synthesiser slides into the backstage area. "Masterbuilder" – aka The Om riff – builds and builds as the rest of the Gong join Blake on stage. The recent King Crimson percussionist immediately makes his presence felt with some splashes of clashing cymbals that Malherbe duets with in some organismic sax swirls that filter about Blake's sounds.

And then Steve Hillage and Mike Howlett take off on their respective guitars and basses as Allen adds some fairly perfunctory rhythm guitar.

And you know what? The Gong are really rocking. I mean in no way had I ever previously thought of their music as more than impeccable jazz rock. But this is raunch of the first order, with Hillage playing mental acrobats with his guitar before virtually disembowelling it on "Perfect Mystery", the second number.

Bruford's niche in the band is quite perfect, and obviously a permanent place within the band could benefit Gong immensely. Indeed, if only on a more ephemeral level Bruford himself has obviously gained in freedom of drumming expression, as his onstage confidence tells.

However, from conversations with him it would appear that Bill Bruford's future is still very much in the open; that he genuinely doesn't know whether to remain with the Gong beyond the end of their European tour on December 18.

It also does seem on the cards that life with the band could prove to be a little too much at the opposite end of the psychic spectrum to the more Calvinistic existence he was used to leading with Robert Fripp and King Crimson.

The band plays for a solid two hours, with perhaps the true pièce de résistance being the seguing of "Flute Salad" into "Oily Way": Didier Malherbe mimes flute playing with a loaf of French bread before picking up the real instrument and creating molton squelches of mini-volcanic eruptions until the audience clap and sway with the anarchic rhythm that begins to emerge from Blake's synthesiser.

The rest of Gong pick up the flow and "Oily Way" drifts into a thrusting mass of Zappa-esque high-grade steel power.

Daevid Allen, the man who nearly wasn't there on the purely musical level of the gig, needn't have turned up.

Allen, however, it emerges from both his activity on stage and from post-gig conversation, is an essential to Gong more in the function of catalyst – as the only representative of the band still totally at one with its ideal of absurdity, and thereby welding together into a (non)corporate module the diversified insanities of ability that have evolved through individual growth.

Despite his personal lacklustre performance – due almost certainly to his illness and his rather unrealistic voyage to the Mediterranean – the presence of Daevid Allen hovers over Gong as an essential constant.

Or, as they say, "Gong is one and one is you." ●

JOHN DICKENSON/GETTY; MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

THE 40 BEST UK PROG ROCK ALBUMS 1968–1978

Rather glorious! From the common room to the topographic ocean, 40 albums to access magical musical worlds. *By Jim Wirth*

THE lexicon of pop writing was still a work in progress when *Melody Maker* reviewed the 1970 debut album by Gentle Giant. You can sense the great vacuum where the word "prog" ought to be as the writer struggles to put this new sound into words: "Musical content is actually rather glorious, with powerful heavy chords and weird, nightmarish-sounding vocals traversing a sky of complex, playful rhythm – all good stuff for an active imagination."

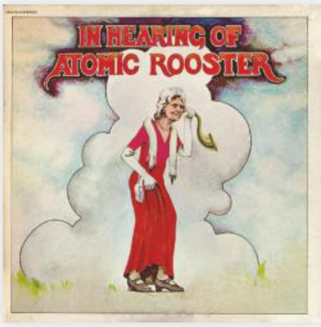
The term "progressive rock" was used in the sleevenote to the first Caravan LP, released in 1968, but did not become a catch-all term for the brand of forward-looking, intellectually inclined music exemplified by Yes and King Crimson until a good while later. Contemporaries didn't necessarily know what prog rock was, so – for the purposes of compiling our Top 40 prog LPs – the first challenge was to define what it wasn't.

Our first arbitrary principle: no genuine progressive rock was made earlier than 1967 (when Procol Harum's "A Whiter Shade Of Pale" was released) or later than 1975, Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* representing the wistful end of an era. Anyone making music that sounded like Genesis or The Moody Blues later than that could no longer claim to be questing for new musical territory.

Blues rock, hard rock, heavy rock, jazz rock, glam, boogie, folk rock, art rock, Afro rock, country rock, 'singer-songwriter' and post-psychedelic 'underground' sounds are also something distinct from progressive rock, meaning our list does not include the Groundhogs, Man, Osibisa, Fairport Convention, Traffic, the Pink Fairies, Roxy Music or Roy Harper.

To further reduce our options, and abiding by the parameters of the magazine, we have worked on the premise that first-flower progressive rock was a British phenomenon, which only really made sense in a world of sixth-form common rooms, *Monty Python* and damp army surplus greatcoats. Frank Zappa's music had jazzy elements and silly time changes but it isn't prog, and nor is Mountain's *Nantucket Sleighride*, Amon Düül II's *Yeti*, or Can's *Tago Mago* (despite ostensible similarities). That also means no place for yodelling Dutchmen Focus, French fantasists Magma or ELP-approved Italians PFM, for which we can – in our slightly supercilious British way – only apologise.

Final principle: to ensure the broadest possible spectrum of releases, we have included nothing by artists who have a chapter dedicated to them in this magazine, and no more than one record by any single act (with the slightly awkward exception of Robert Wyatt, who gets in with Matching Mole and as a solo act). That leaves us with 40 records, which (hopefully) are – to quote that same *Melody Maker* review – "exceedingly clever... with a good sense of make-believe and vision". Or, to put it more briefly, quintessentially prog.



1 ATOMIC ROOSTER IN HEARING OF

B&C, 1971

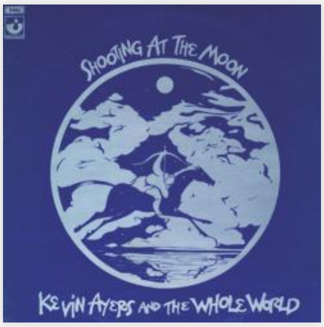
Heavy rockers Atomic Rooster messed with the formula in 1971, stripping back John Du Cann's guitar to allow Vincent Crane's keyboards to lead. Their reward: two hit singles ("The Devil's Answer" and "Tomorrow Night") and their best-remembered album.

Audience in... THE HOUSE
ON THE HILL

2 AUDIENCE THE HOUSE ON THE HILL

CHARISMA, 1971

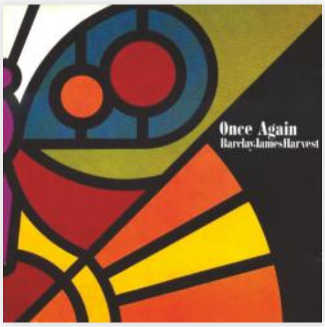
Audience provided the music for 1969 skinhead film *Bronco Bullfrog*, but bovver boots were never their thing. The title track from their anguished third LP paints them as less frenzied fellow travellers to labelmates Van der Graaf Generator.


SHOOTING AT THE MOON
KEVIN AYERS AND THE WHOLE WORLD

3 KEVIN AYERS AND THE WHOLE WORLD SHOOTING AT THE MOON

HARVEST, 1969

The blond, handsome Ayers morphed into a kind of psychedelic Dean Martin after deciding he wasn't sufficiently technically proficient to continue as Soft Machine's bassist. Only his wayward second album – featuring a young Mike Oldfield – is proper prog.



4 BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST ONCE AGAIN

HARVEST, 1970

Oldham's answer to The Moody Blues, BJH had real staying power, lasting until 1998 in their original incarnation. Their second album features heavy orchestration, a vague "Echoes" mood and two of their most enduring songs, "Mocking Bird" and "Galadriel".

BEGGARS OPERA
WATERS OF CHANGE

5 BEGGARS OPERA
WATERS OF CHANGE

VERTIGO, 1971

Proof that prog could survive north of Hadrian's Wall, Glasgow's Beggars Opera made four LPs of faintly ridiculous orchestral pomp for Vertigo in the early '70s. Guitarist Ricky Gardiner later played on David Bowie's *Low*, while organist Alan Park became Cliff Richard's musical director.

PETE BROWN & PIBLOKTO!
...THE ART SCHOOL DANCE GOES ON FOR EVER

6 PETE BROWN AND PIBLOKTO!
THINGS MAY COME AND THINGS MAY GO BUT THE ART SCHOOL DANCE GOES ON FOREVER

HARVEST, 1969

Most famous as Cream's lyricist, Pete Brown made a host of LPs with Battered Ornaments and then the more jazzy Piblokto!. The thunderous title track is an underground classic.

CAMEL
music inspired by
The Snow Goose

7 CAMEL
MUSIC INSPIRED BY THE SNOW GOOSE

DECCA, 1975

Paul Gallicoe's tear-jerking novel was the blueprint for this flute-flavoured tour de force, a winner with *Whistle Test* viewers of the time. On the Radio 2 end of the progressive spectrum, perhaps, but few captured the mood of the post-*Tubular Bells* world so adeptly.

8 CATAPILLA
CATAPILLA

VERTIGO, 1970

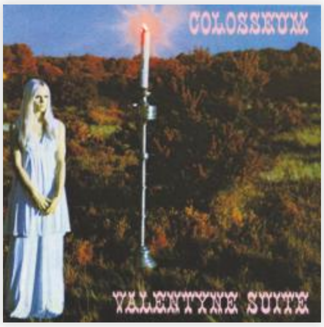
Progressive rock was something of a boys' club, making Anna Meek's deranged presence on Catapilla's two stupidly rare LPs all the more remarkable. One of the great lost vocal talents of the age, she sounds – frequently – like Cleo Laine on fire.

CENTIPEDE/SEPTOBER ENERGY

9 CENTIPEDE
SEPTOBER ENERGY

NEON, 1971

A notorious four-sided folly marshalled by pianist Keith Tippett, Centipede were a 50-piece ensemble, accommodating bits of Soft Machine and King Crimson plus plenty of brit-jazz talent. Exhausting and messy, but very much of its moment.



10 COLOSSEUM
VALENTYNE SUITE

VERTIGO, 1969

The first band on the Vertigo spiral label, Colosseum was the prog-rock endeavour of brit-jazzers Jon Hiseman and Dick Heckstall-Smith, and featured the mighty Hammond of Dave Greenslade. A long-hair version of Dave Brubeck, perhaps, but thoroughly rocking in parts.

11 COMUS
FIRST UTTERANCE

DAWN, 1971

A Dark Ages King Crimson, Comus were cohorts of David Bowie from his Beckenham Arts Lab days. Their debut album is a genuinely hideous evocation of pagan savagery and mental distress, played on wheezing acoustic instruments. Gripping but grisly.

Cressida
Asylum

12 CRESSIDA
ASYLUM

VERTIGO, 1971

Plenty of jazzy Hammond organ and a guest appearance from flautist extraordinaire Harold McNair are perhaps the key selling points of Cressida's ill-fated second LP, finally released the year after they split. The intemperate "To Play Your Little Game" might have been a hit in a better world.

CZAR
fontana

13 CZAR
CZAR

FONTANA, 1970

Very heavy, but regrettably humble, Czar left barely a trace during their own time, but received some posthumous attention for their sombre self-titled LP when US rapper Tyler, The Creator used a sample from the wistful "Today" on his 2019 hit "Puppet".

Mice And Rats In The Loft Jan Dukes de Grey

14 JAN DUKES DE GREY
MICE AND RATS IN THE LOFT

TRANSATLANTIC, 1971

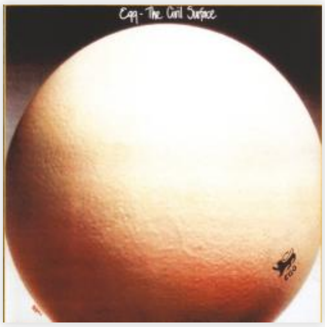
From Sheffield, Jan Dukes De Grey started out as a second-tier Tyrannosaurus Rex before taking a wild prog-ward swing with their follow-up. The side-long "Sun Symphonica" is an acoustic rhapsody, but the creepy title track – extremely bad trip Jethro Tull – is the winner.

mercator projected by east of eden

15 EAST OF EDEN
MERCATOR PROJECTED

DERAM, 1969

Dave Arbus's greatest claim to rock fame was playing the violin solo on The Who's "Baba O'Riley", but his multi-instrumental skills ensured that Bristol's East Of Eden qualified as prog for their debut LP, though a novelty hit with 1971's "Jig-A-Jig" killed some of their countercultural buzz.



16 EGG
THE CIVIL SURFACE

VIRGIN, 1974

Keyboard wizard Dave Stewart and ex-Spirogyra singer Barbara Gaskin had a decidedly un-prog No1 1981 hit with "It's My Party", but his three-piece band Egg did mad time signatures like few others. "Nearch", from their oboe-heavy comeback album, is a terrifying musical brain teaser.

➢

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT

17 FAMILY
FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT

REPRISE, 1969

The stars of Jenny Fabian's 1969 novel *Groupie*, Leicester's Family were just – like Jethro Tull – a psychedelic blues band gone feral. Their oddball post-psychedelic is best sampled here; even Roger Chapman's astringent voice cannot suck the beauty out of "Emotions" and "The Weaver's Answer".

Fruupp
The Prince of heavens eyes

18 FRUUPP
THE PRINCE OF HEAVEN'S EYES

DAWN, 1974

The best of the Belfast band's four LPs for Pye's progressive subsidiary label, this conceptual piece is Yes at their drippiest with a worrying Broadway twist. Fruupp's delightfully ungainly progress was hampered in 1975 when main songwriter Stephen Houston quit to become a priest.

19 FUCHSIA
FUCHSIA

PEGASUS, 1971

A profoundly heavy-looking cover perhaps mis-sells the lone LP by these Exeter University alumni, which is best described as the Electric Light Orchestra on starvation rations. Hallucinogenic mini-suite "Gone With The Mouse" is a classic nonetheless.

Gentle Giant
Octopus

20 GENTLE GIANT
OCTOPUS

VERTIGO, 1972

As members of Simon Dupree & The Big Sound, the Shulman brothers had a psychedelic hit with "Kites" before morphing into the unashamedly pretentious Gentle Giant. Their third album features Bee Gees harmonies, crazy time signatures and one of Roger Dean's very best sleeves.

RCA VICTOR
Gnidrolog
Lady
Lake

21 GNIDROLOG
LADY LAKE

RCA, 1972

Twin brothers Stewart and Colin Goldring gained some kind of punk notoriety with the Pork Dukes' filthy "Telephone Masturbator" but had done rather more substantial work with Gnidrolog. Honky Madness-style saxophone has helped make their two 1972 LPs enduring novelties.

Greenslade

22 GREENSLADE
GREENSLADE

WARNER BROTHERS, 1973

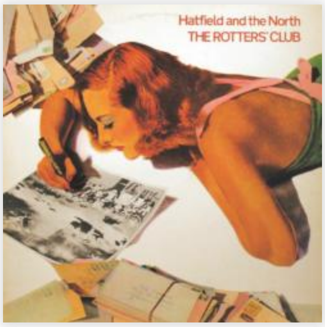
A whopper of a Roger Dean sleeve made it clear to buyers what to expect from Hammond monster Dave Greenslade's first LP, which comes across as prime-era Yes spliced with the Small Faces circa "Tin Soldier". Opener "Feathered Friends" is the one to google.

MIDNIGHT MUSHRUMPS
Gryphon

23 GRYPHON
MIDNIGHT MUSHRUMPS

TRANSATLANTIC, 1974

Crumhorn-toting graduates of the Royal Academy of Music, Gryphon started out as medieval fetishists of the Amazing Blondel school, but found a timeslip *Tubular Bells* groove with the sidelong title track here, conceived for a performance of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.



24 HATFIELD AND THE NORTH
THE ROTTERS' CLUB

VIRGIN, 1975

Richard Sinclair's refuge after he left Caravan, the impish Hatfield And The North (name stolen from a road sign on the A1) did clever wordplay as well as intense jazzy meandering on their two albums, this second one also lending its title to Jonathan Coe's mighty prog roman à clef.

25 HENRY COW
UNREST

VIRGIN, 1974

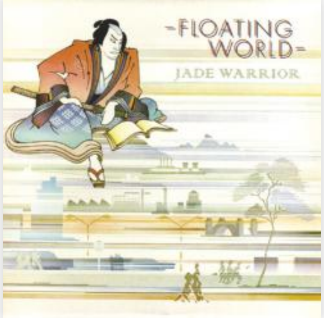
Mainstays of the austere Rock In Opposition movement, the Cambridge-educated Henry Cow veered deliberately towards the unlistenably cerebral. Their second LP is an intense affair, defined by Lindsay Cooper's omnipresent oboe and Chris Cutler's improbably busy drumming.

High Tide
Sea Shanties

26 HIGH TIDE
SEA SHANTIES

LIBERTY, 1969

An apocalyptic hard-rock band with a twist, what separated High Tide from the Black Sabbath set was the idiosyncratic combination of Tony Hill's guitar and future Hawkwind man Simon House's wailing violin. Their debut is a bruising encounter, but not without subtle touches.



27 JADE WARRIOR
FLOATING WORLD

ISLAND, 1974

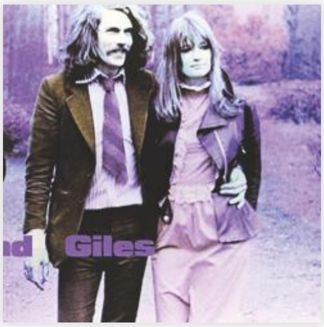
Featuring refugees from psychedelic also-rans July, Jade Warrior's USP was weaving world music into their prog tapestry, an innovation that won them precious little attention until this, their fourth LP, which mirrors the ambient soundscapes of Brian Eno and laid-back krautrockers Cluster.

KHAN
SPACE SHANTY

28 KHAN
SPACE SHANTY

DERAM, 1971

Steve Hillage had not perfected his blissful Gong-age guitar chops when he formed his second significant band (after Uriel/Arzachel), but Khan's lone LP is appealing still; a mix of wistful Caravan pop and Uriah Heep sludge, best sampled on "Driving To Amsterdam".



29 McDONALD AND GILES
McDONALD & GILES

ISLAND, 1971

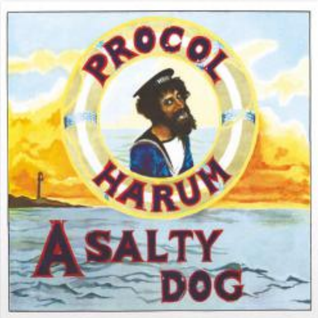
Ian McDonald and Michael Giles found the going too heavy after appearing on King Crimson's debut LP, and moved into more wistful territory with this record, a cross between Emerson, Lake & Palmer and The Kinks. It also features a much-sampled hip-hop break.

MATCHING MOLE

30 MATCHING MOLE
MATCHING MOLE

CBS, 1971

A bit too flippant to persist in Soft Machine beyond the instrmental *Fourth*, Robert Wyatt quit in 1971 to form this punningly named act (*machine molle* is Soft Machine in French). The first of their two LPs has strung-out jazz vibes aplenty, plus one of prog's great love songs, "O Caroline".



31 PROCOL HARUM
A SALTY DOG REGAL

ZONOPHONE, 1969

The Bach-flavoured "Whiter Shade Of Pale" has a decent claim to being the first great prog record, but pop success perhaps killed some of the Southend-on-Sea men's underground kudos. Their first four albums are all great, but the title track here sums up their mournful majesty best.

QUATERMASS

32 QUATERMASS
QUATERMASS

HARVEST, 1970

Royal Academy Of Music-educated keyboardist John Peter Robinson was the star attraction in this three-piece act, whose music offered a slightly leftfield take on Traffic's hairy mod sound. Robinson went on to bigger things, notably writing the score for *Wayne's World*.

QUIET SUN
MAINSTREAM

33 QUIET SUN
MAINSTREAM

ISLAND, 1975

A few years above Nigel Farage at Dulwich College, King Crimson-alike experimentalists Quiet Sun's choppy efforts were set to go unrecorded after they split in 1972, but – flush with Roxy Music success – guitarist Phil Manzanera brought his band back together to immortalise their set in 1975.

RARE BIRD
AS YOUR MIND FLIES BY

34 RARE BIRD
AS YOUR MIND FLIES BY

CHARISMA, 1970

On the slightly nasty side of The Nice, organ-toting proggers Rare Bird had a No 1 hit in France and Germany with "Sympathy" but saved their best pseudo-classical shot for the anguished side-long title suite on their second album.

35 SECONDHAND
REALITY

POLYDOR, 1968

Streatham teenagers the Moving Finger were forced to change their name after recording their debut album, a slab of slightly doomy post-psychedelic rock, which, at its best – on the ambitious "Mainliner" – anticipates the Crimson sound.

STRAWBS
BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

36 STRAWBS
BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

A&M, 1973

Serious heads might not have approved of the Strawbs' three-day-week-inspired hit single "Part Of The Union", but there was no denying the progressive intent of its mother LP, the one-time folk-rockers coming across like The Byrds with classical pretensions. Juicy.

37 T2
IT'LL ALL WORK OUT IN BOOMLAND

DECCA, 1970

Rescued from the bargain bins after selling in pitiful quantities at the time, power trio T2's lone LP is prized as an underground classic now, by virtue of a frenzied opening track ("In Circles") and an all-action side-long suite, "Morning".

tea & symphony

38 TEA & SYMPHONY
AN ASYLUM FOR THE MUSICALLY INSANE

HARVEST, 1969

A uniquely garish post-*Yellow Submarine* sleeve sets the tone for the first of the Birmingham weirdies' two LPs. A performance-art troupe gone bad, the hellbound Bonzo Dog ambience of "Armchair Theatre" sums up their challenging ethos.

WISHBONE ASH
ARGUS

39 WISHBONE ASH
ARGUS

MCA, 1972

A sterling Hipgnosis sleeve just about nudges *Sounds* magazine's Album Of The Year for 1972 from hard rock into the prog section. The Torquay act's twin-guitar assault had them pegged as the British Allman Brothers, but if they had Stateside appeal, the glum mood is very much Brit-prog.

Robert Wyatt
ROCK BOTTOM

40 ROBERT WYATT
ROCK BOTTOM

VIRGIN, 1974

Fated to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair after a 1973 fall from a window, the once-hyperactive Soft Machine drummer entered a dreamy netherworld for this crushingly brilliant mood piece, Ivor Cutler's cameo on "Little Red Robin Hood Hit The Road" a defining moment. ●

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

Prog's "intensity engine", beloved even of punks. Peter Hammill and band channel the electric crackle of convulsing times. *By Nick Hasted*

VAN Der Graaf Generator were always too fearsome to comfortably fit even prog's open house of public school freaks and outsized ambitions. Though they filled vinyl sides with song-suites performed with hurricane virtuosity, their inherent extremity was nearer to punk. "A true original," Johnny Rotten enthused of the band's leader Peter Hammill, when he played two tracks from his glam-garage solo record *Nadir's Big Chance* (1975) on Capitol Radio in 1977. "I love all his stuff." David Bowie, Mark E Smith, Nick Cave and Graham Coxon have also been in Hammill's catholic if select fan club.

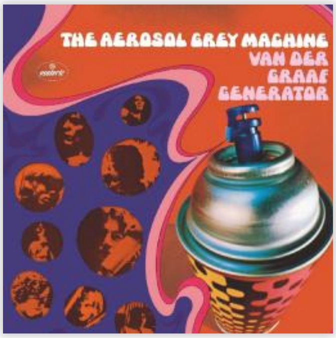
Van Der Graaf's uniqueness certainly centres on their singer-songwriter, perhaps prog's only great example of each discipline (Peter Gabriel and Roger Waters' compositional peaks notwithstanding), who has consistently mined gold from his theme of fated human foolishness over more than 50 group and solo records, sung in a vaulting, possessed voice that was compared at the time to Hendrix's use of guitar.

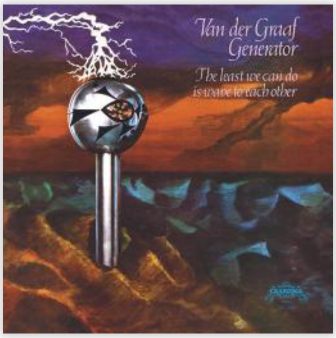
In the band's classic '70s lineup, electric twin-sax showman David Jackson, Brian Wilson-influenced organ innovator Hugh Banton and jazz-schooled drummer Guy Evans were equally essential to their power. But what is just as striking is how much VDGG acted as a lightning rod for the '70s' tensions, as their music's black-hole heaviness was matched by currents around it, forcing them to regularly split up when it all got too much. "We were fuelling this intensity engine," Evans believed, looking back.

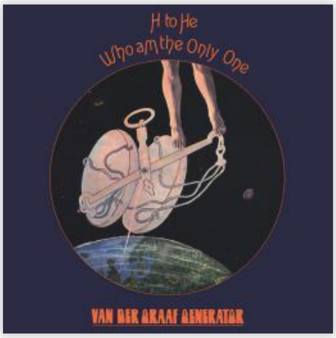
The charge-sheet of weirdness is extensive, reading like a cross between the *Fortean Times* and *The Godfather*. In short order in July 1977, a booking at Ibiza's first music festival saw the successive near drownings of bassist Nic Potter and then Evans' seven-year-old daughter, witchy black-clothed old women giving the evil eye at their gig, a widely reported UFO apparition, and a sense of oppressive psychic dread that followed Evans back to London, as if he and the band were briefly cursed.

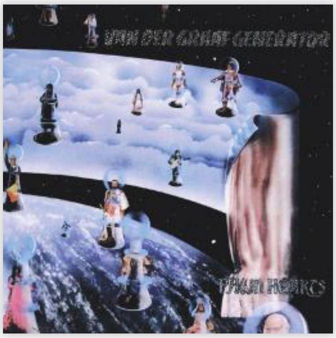
An infamous 1977 tour of Italy resulted in masked forces – either Fascist or Communist, the lines were blurred – raining potentially fatal missiles onto the stage, before the Van Der Graaf truck ploughed through the venue's glass wall to escape. The truck's luck ran out when the Mafia kidnapped it. "It all spoke of 'Van Der Graaf must be stopped,'" Jackson believed. "We're not a political band, but our music was bloody weird, powerful stuff, exciting enormous emotions, and the authorities would not accept it. The police escorted us to the border."

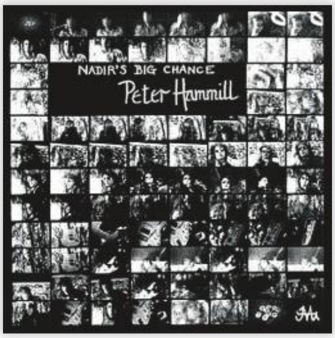
These incidents happened to Van Der Graaf at such frequency in such convulsing Latin nations because this was their ➢

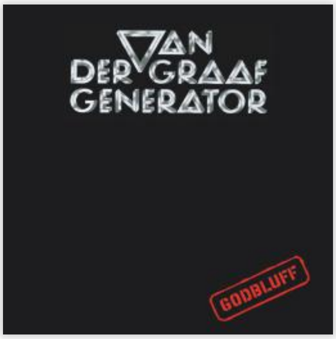

THE AEROSOL GREY MACHINE
VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

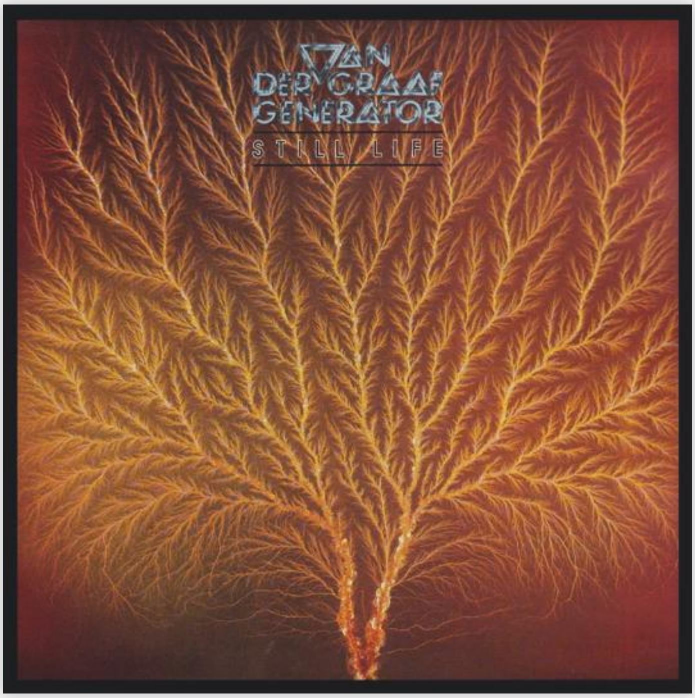

Van der Graaf Generator
The least we can do is wave to each other


H to He
Who am the Only One
VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR


VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR
PAWN HEARTS


NADIR'S BIG CHANCE
Peter Hammill


VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR
GODBLUFF


VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR
STILL LIFE

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR THE AEROSOL GREY MACHINE
MERCURY, 1969
5/10

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS WAVE TO EACH OTHER CHARISMA, 1970
6/10

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR H TO HE, WHO AM THE ONLY ONE CHARISMA, 1970
7/10

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR PAWN HEARTS
CHARISMA, 1971
8/10

PETER HAMMILL NADIR'S BIG CHANCE CHARISMA, 1975
8/10

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR GODBLUFF CHARISMA, 1975
6/10

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR STILL LIFE CHARISMA, 1976
9/10

PETER HAMMILL OVER CHARISMA, 1976
8/10

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR WORLD RECORD
CHARISMA, 1976
6/10

VAN DER GRAAF THE QUIET ZONE–THE PLEASURE DOME
CHARISMA, 1977
5/10

PETER HAMMILL SINGULARITY FIE!, 2006
7/10

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR TRISECTOR FIE!, 2008
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PETER HAMMILL THIN AIR FIE!, 2009
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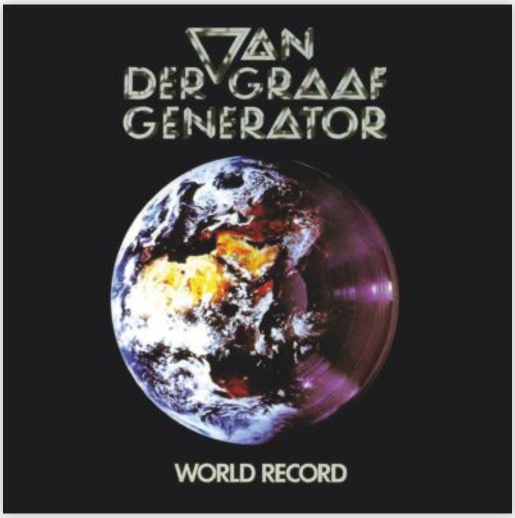
PETER HAMMILL
OVER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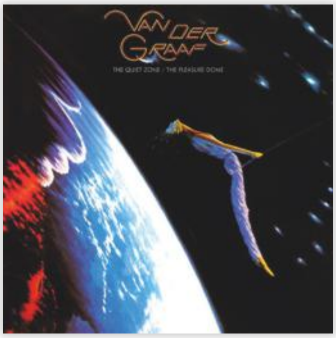
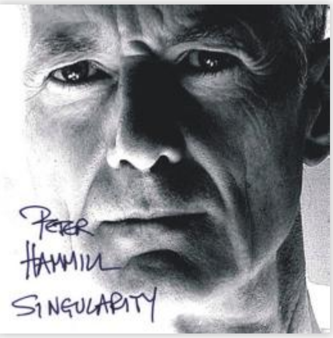
WORLD RECORD

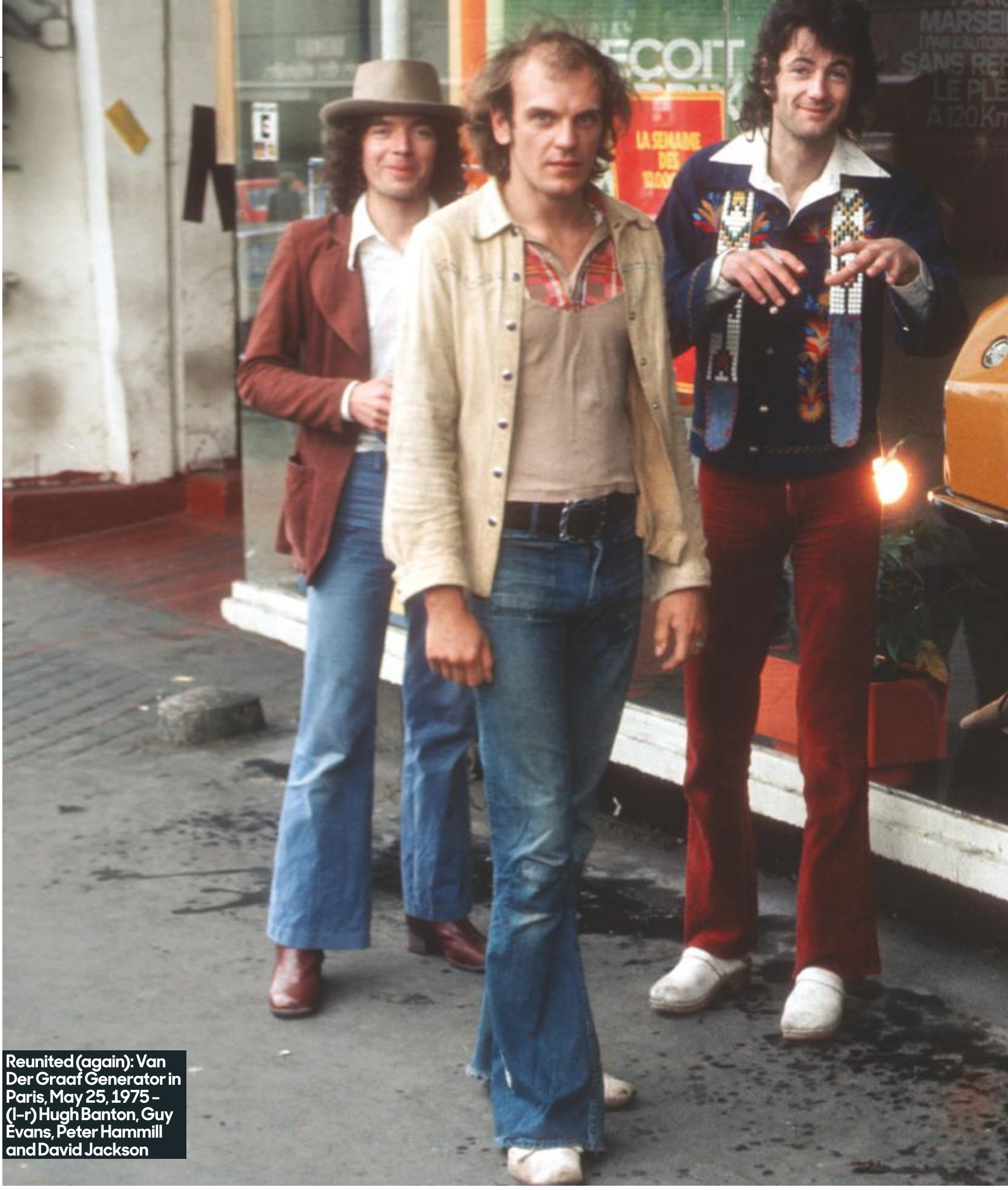

VAN DER GRAAF
THE QUIET ZONE / THE PLEASURE DOME


PETER HAMMILL
SINGULARITY

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR
Trisector

PETER HAMMILL
THIN AIR

tumultuous music's natural home. A cult at best in the UK, their 1971 masterpiece *Pawn Hearts* made them Top 10 icons in Italy, where their clothes were ripped by mobs in the street. Though apparently very English in style, the band's pursuit of what Hammill terms a Fellini-like "serious laugh" in their music was understood here. "The game was to ride it," he once told me of these dangerous social currents. "In terms of live experience, this was such a privilege. Because a lot of our touring was in the Baader-Meinhof era, and Brigada Rossa in Italy. This energy, and electric crackle, it wasn't just about music, it was culture-wide."



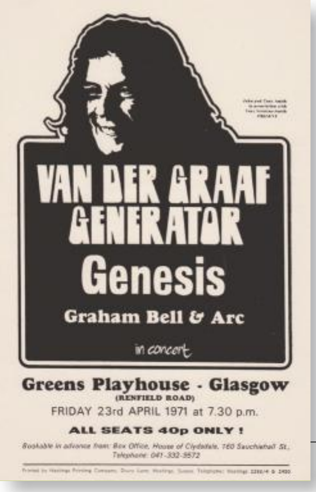
Reunited (again): Van Der Graaf Generator in Paris, May 25, 1975 – (l–r) Hugh Banton, Guy Evans, Peter Hammill and David Jackson

IAN DICKSON/GETTY IMAGES

The teenage Hammill began from a very different spot when an unstable childhood settled down in Derby in 1960, where the influence of "British beat groups, R&B and soul" made him an enthusiastic if unlikely mod, while also being taught by Jesuits "inspirational in their obsession". The addition of science-fiction, psychedelics and Hendrix were sufficient to steer him from novelistic ambitions to the nascent prog movement of "seasoned beat group members, public-school boys and art-school students" such as The Soft Machine and Pink Floyd, after he formed the first Van Der Graaf Generator with Chris "Judge" Smith at Manchester University in 1967.

"Fire", the B-side of this quickly junked prototype group's sole single, "People You Were Going To", is wildly overwrought, with whinnying electric guitar backing Hammill's distraught vocal. There are no such dead-ends two years later, with Smith edged out by Hammill's burgeoning songwriting and Banton and Evans on board for *The Aerosol Grey Machine* (1969), an intended solo record reconfigured as a band debut owing to contractual contortions that saw it barely released in the UK. Evans' drums make a hesitant start to an album recorded in 12 intense hours, while Hammill can be lyrically callow (warning "*you will lose your sane*" in "Necromancer", inspired by their acquaintance Graham Bond, then in his Crowleyite phase). But his voice is already pushing further out than his peers, hurling words from some existential parapet on "Running Back", and essaying extreme crooning. On "Into A Game", Who-like acoustic guitar strums rev into extended R&B charges, as VDGG cohere on the spot, roaring through climaxes of crushing gravity.

Twin saxes give high animal snorts as they ride over a trampling rhythm section's pistol-shot drums



VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR
Genesis
Graham Bell & Arc
in concert
Greens Playhouse - Glasgow
(RENFIELD ROAD)
FRIDAY 23rd APRIL 1971 at 7.30 p.m.
ALL SEATS 40p ONLY !
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With David Jackson's crucial addition, 1970's *The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other* is considered by many, Hammill included, to be their proper debut. "Darkness (11/11)" serves notice of heaviness to come. But a different, achingly beautiful path not taken is caught on "Refugees", a single as well as album track. The song's prosaic source was the fleeting blues of Hammill, 21, at the finish of a west London flat-share with friends Mike McLean and actress Susan Penhaligon. But when he sings that "*west is Mike and Susie*" here, it seems to describe a heroically sought sanctuary where gentle young hippies might find respite from a looming apocalypse. Strings, flute and harmonies carry the limpid melody of this pastoral English science-fiction vignette. The "Hendrix of the voice" stays restrained, painful memories perhaps inspiring a vocal that defines yearning youth (when he sings it aged 70 these days, the song's moving defiance is all the greater).

Quests in the face of indifferent cosmic forces would prove a regular theme. "And then one of us or something would blow up," Hammill has laughed of Van Der Graaf's similar pursuit of some undefined, tantalising Grail. At any rate, the warmth of "Refugees" spreads to other songs on the album, the embers of the '60s counterculture's bright hopes and accompanying, inviting chamber-rock still aglow.

"Killer", the opening track on *H to He, Who Am The Only One* (1970) put a stop to that. Set "*on a black day, in a black month, at the black bottom of the sea*", Jackson's opening swagger of threatening sax gives way to Hammill's sneering description of his protagonist: "*And you kill all that come near you/But you are lonely.*" Jackson's twin saxes then give high animal snorts as they ride over a trampling rhythm section's pistol-shot drums, and Hammill's big, blasting voice becomes implacably demanding. The blessed release of a piano and Hammond soul groove recalls Hammill's soul-boy days, a bright '60s pop element which the band have retained for occasional deployment, just when it seems existential angst is their only MO. "Killer" still teeters heedlessly on the edge of hysterical absurdity with its none-more-black tale. Because Hammill has always hidden a heady sense of romance within his seeming message of human futility, "Killer" anyway concludes with him singing "*we need love*", voice softening on the last word.

H To He... kept some of the earlier albums' approachability, and Van Der Graaf's

Reed 'em and weep: David Jackson with alto, soprano and tenor saxes, March 1975

sponsor Tony Stratton-Smith, who had founded Charisma Records in part to promote them, sent them on a momentum-building, budget UK "Six Bob Tour" with Genesis in support, putting Hammill in brief contact with one of his few peers in prog individuality, Peter Gabriel. Van Der Graaf nevertheless doubled down on "Killer"'s portrait of alienation with *Pawn Hearts* (1971), and its side-long centrepiece "A Plague of Lighthouse Keepers". This is Van Der Graaf at their most definitively divisive. Really a collage of nine songs that Hammill forced on his dubious bandmates, its sea-monster saxes and steam-engine drums are balanced by phases floating in atmospheric limbo, its oppressive storms always eventually clearing. "*I feel I am drowning, hands stretched in the dark,*" Hammill's latest majestic loner declares, as he presses on towards some sort of redemption.

Three 1972 Italian tours to capitalise on *Pawn Hearts*' success, complete with tear-gas and riots, served to shatter the band. "We could never find the hotels, Banton recalled, "but we always knew where the hospitals were." So VDGG split for a second time, Hammill went briefly "batty", and, undaunted, recorded five solo albums in quick succession. Getting the band back together to play on 1975's *Nadir's Big Chance*, the intensity machine then resumed.

Godbluff (1975) accompanied that crazed Italian tour of crashing and kidnapped trucks, but was merely a dry run for *Still Life* (1976), perhaps even more than *Pawn Hearts* the ultimate expression of the band's mixture of bleak realism and fragile hope, heavy instrumental pressure and exhilaration. The introspective quiet of "My Room", all contemplative piano and brushed drums, gives piquant contrast to a sequence of epics. "Still Life" imagines the bitter ennui of endless existence. Then Van Der Graaf's quest climaxes with the majestic "Childlike Faith in Childhood's End", which contemplates a truer immortality, as our brief lives contribute to humanity's incremental progress. "*The peak's distance breaks my heart, for I shall never see it/Still I play my part,*" Hammill roars, his voice blasting through the barriers to eternity.

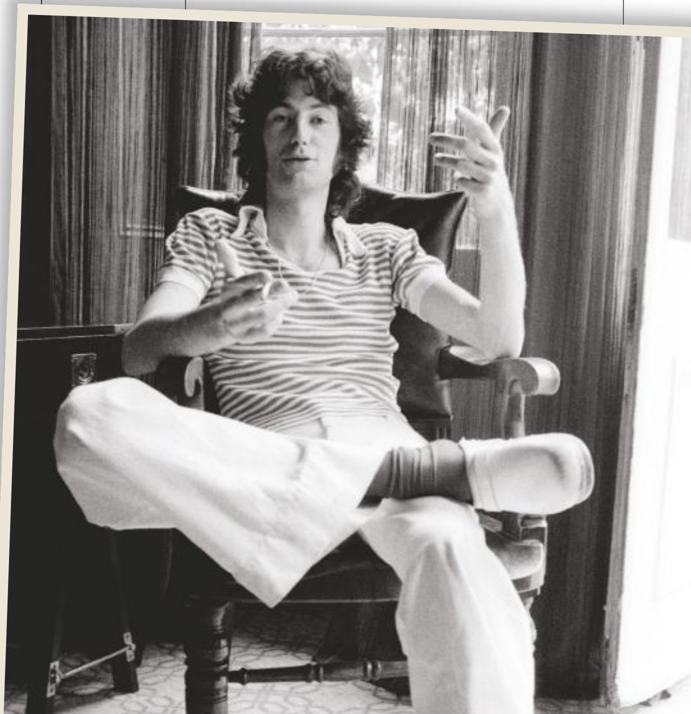
It was all too much, again. Returning from tour to find his long-term partner Alice gone, Hammill wrote one of the great break-up albums, *Over* (1976), and the band pressed on with the year's third release, *World Record*. The strain inherent in making this music combined with the lack of financial reward to make first Banton and then Jackson bail. Evans and Hammill remained for the renamed, Generator-less Van Der Graaf's relatively slick *The Quiet Zone-The Pleasure Dome* (1977), and that Ibiza meltdown. Following a live double album, *Vital* (1978), a third split seemed understandably final.

Hammill retreated from the spotlight he'd been seared by in Italy, building a cottage industry solo career of prolific quality. Rather than slow him down, a near-fatal 2004 heart attack merely gave him more material, on the late high-water marks *Singularity* (2006) and *Thin Air* (2009), the latter a truly haunted reckoning with death, taking in 9/11.

2018's massive eight-hour solo boxset *Not Yet Not Now* shows the variety he can now display with just piano, guitar and that voice. The woman-beater described in "Like Veronica Lake" makes him quiver and growl with outrage, and his guitar rattle and clang as if shaking a cage. And among rock songwriters, maybe only Ray Davies is contemplating ageing and death so readily. "Patient" is one of many songs confronting "*all that we can't control*", its piano circling, like someone treading water before they sink. "The Mercy", from 2009's *Thin Air*, takes the Captain Oates exit from existence ("*I might be some time…*"). Against this, "A Better Time" from *X My Heart* (1996) comfortingly resolves: "*Just go on/Just go further.*"

After a May 6, 2005 comeback at London's Royal Festival Hall, Van Der Graaf Generator also resumed their part in a prog catalogue that only Robert Fripp can now match for capacious, insistent intent. David Jackson left in fractious circumstances soon afterwards. *Trisector* (2008) saw the remaining trio respond with brisk soul grooves, and "Over the Hill"'s heroic tribute to "*comradeship*": one last grand, doomed charge against extinction. ●

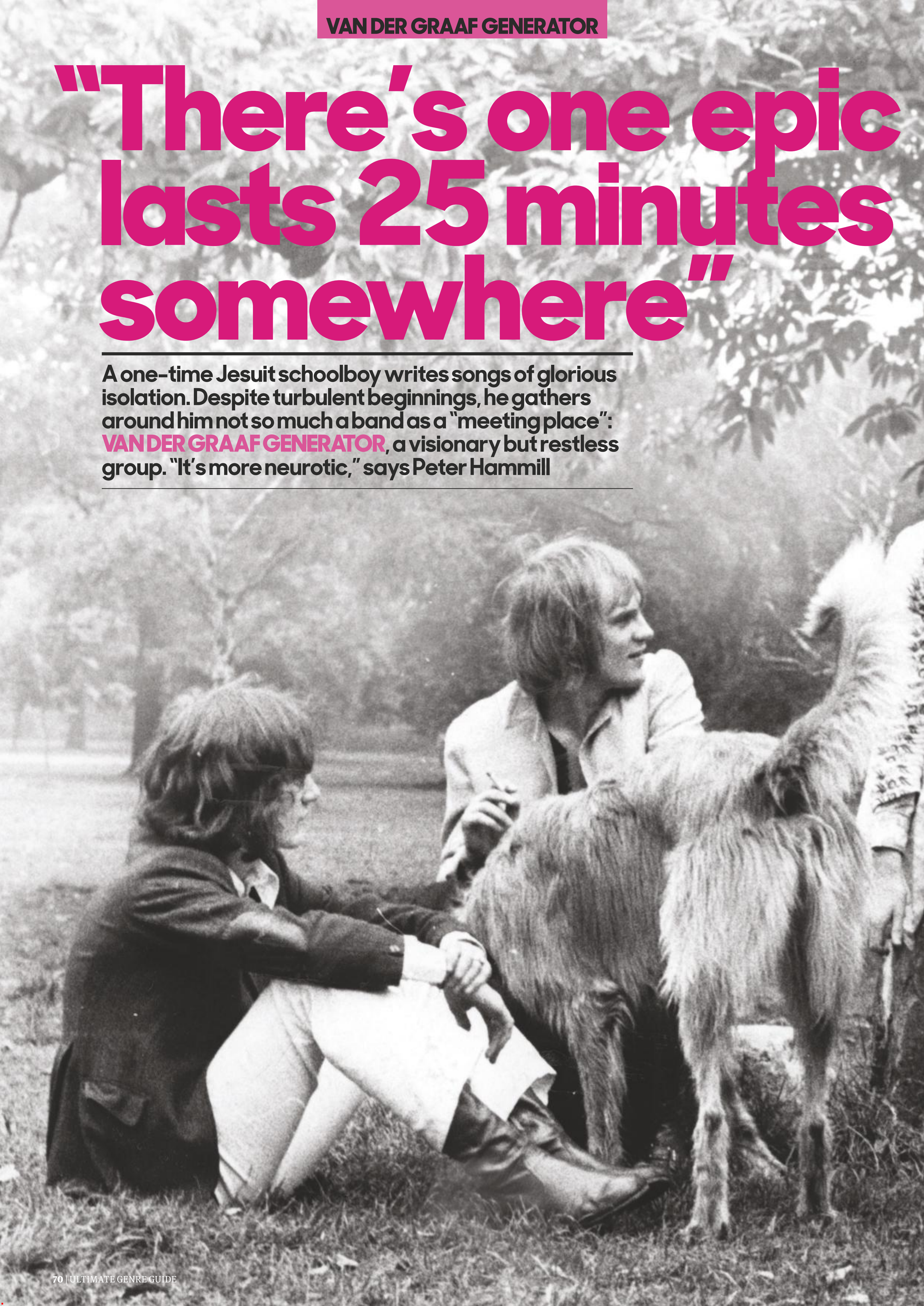
Peter Hammill shortly after the release of fourth solo LP *In Camera*, August 1974



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

"There's one epic lasts 25 minutes somewhere"

A one-time Jesuit schoolboy writes songs of glorious isolation. Despite turbulent beginnings, he gathers around him not so much a band as a "meeting place": VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR, a visionary but restless group. "It's more neurotic," says Peter Hammill



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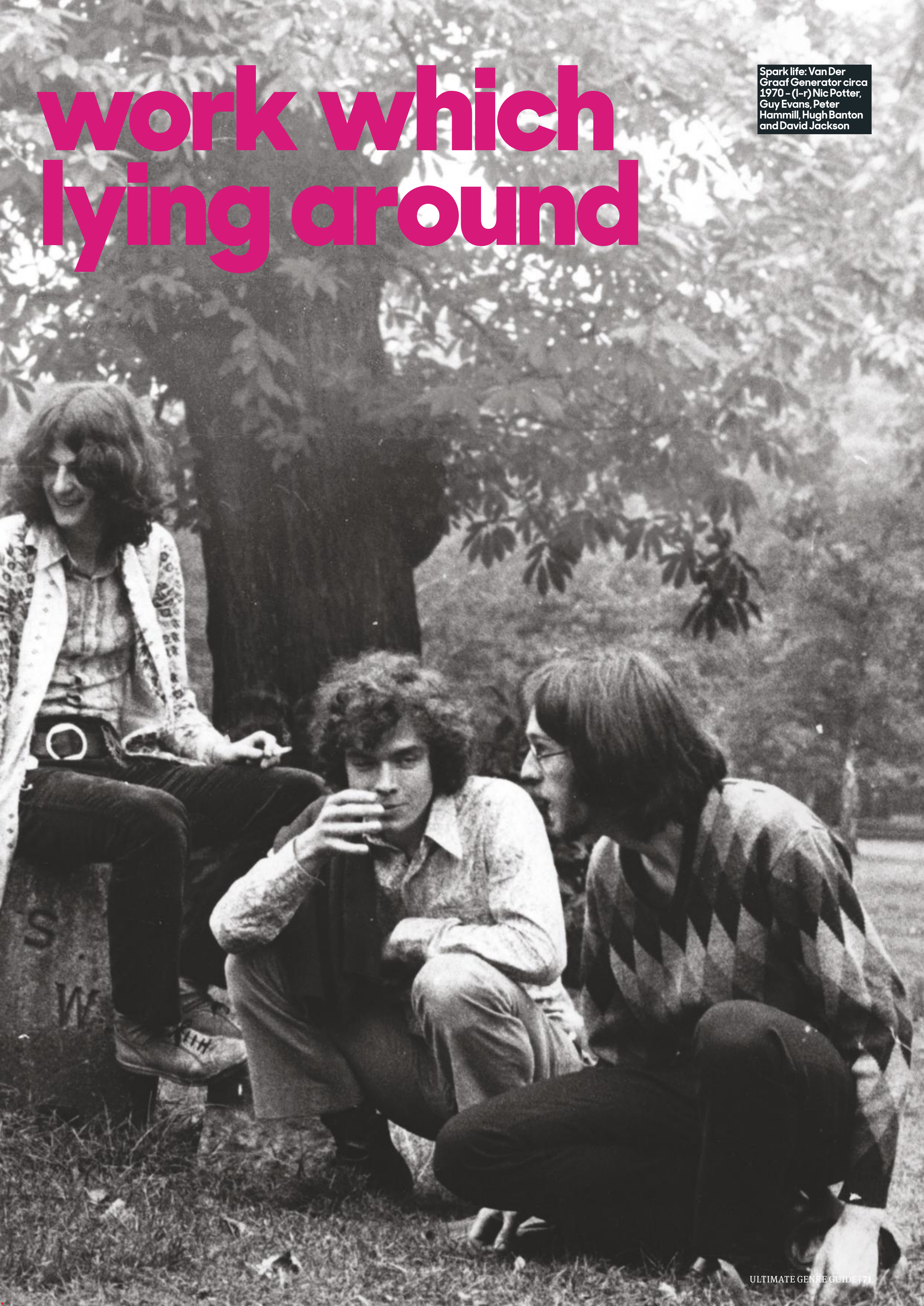

Spark life: Van Der Graaf Generator circa 1970 – (l-r) Nic Potter, Guy Evans, Peter Hammill, Hugh Banton and David Jackson

MELODY MAKER 14 MARCH, 1970

Melody Maker
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VAN DER Graaf Generator is a name that will probably be familiar to you, even if their music isn't. Through many trials and tribulations, they've been around for quite a while.

Now they're on the point of surfacing, and if there's any justice in the world, their new album, *The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other*, will bring praise showering on their heads from every quarter.

Although the group is uniformly brilliant, the voice and songs of 21-year-old Peter Hammill are the immediate mind-grabbers. It was he who, just over a year ago, put together the first group with the aid of manager Tony Stratton-Smith, a band which included organist Hugh Banton, bassist Keith Ellis and drummer Guy Evans.

Let Peter tell his story: "I began writing songs when I was at a Jesuit boarding school, and every night after lights-out I'd make up songs and write the words down. I was 14 or 15 then, and I couldn't play anything, but later I got a harmonica and then a £5 guitar. It was the kind of obvious stuff that anyone would write at that age.

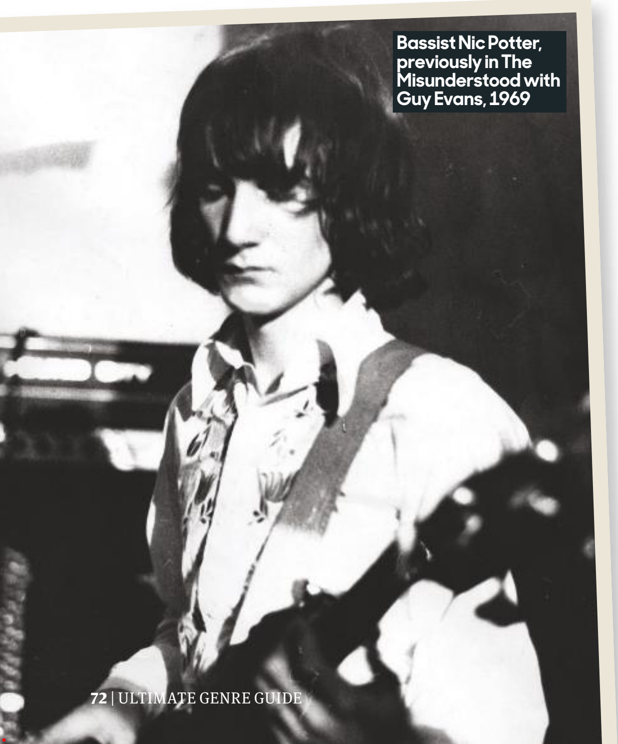
"Then came summer '67, when I started writing more things and at the same time stopped writing rubbish. I'd spend a week on a song rather than a couple of days.

"I couldn't get into my course at Manchester [*University*], and after I'd discovered the piano there I didn't stop writing at all. Now, writing's a less conscious thing for me. I jot down little riffs and eventually a whole song comes together."

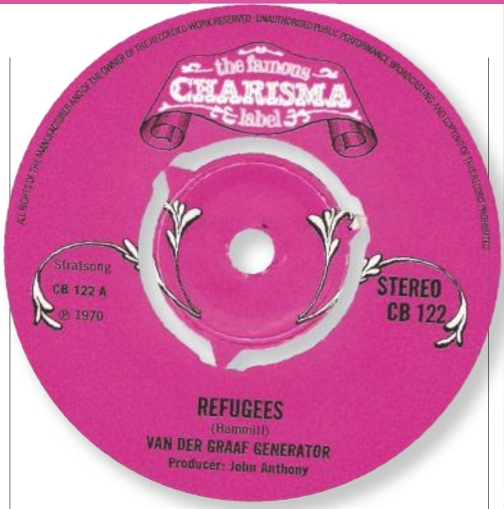
At university Peter began singing and playing guitar with a bunch of people, specifically in a duo with another guy named Chris.

"The original band started when we got Hugh, Keith and Guy, and then Chris left. That was the old working band – of course, we were in London by this time.

"We had a bad hang-up because Chris and I had signed a terrible recording contract, in our innocence, and it looked like we wouldn't be able to get out of it."



Bassist Nic Potter, previously in The Misunderstood with Guy Evans, 1969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REFUGEES
(Hammill)
VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR
Producer: John Anthony

Perhaps their worst setback came when all their gear, plus an extra drum kit, was stolen four days after they'd bought it.

"Tony was in the States and we were on our own," said Guy. "We borrowed and hired gear overnight, so the sound was different at each gig. It turned into a complete aggression thing. We were so pent up, and the only way we could get it out was by playing."

Peter: "So one night after a gig at the Marquee we came back to the office and sat around for a couple of hours discussing the prospects, and decided to split."

They were apart for five months. Peter played on his own, at the Lyceum and at Plumpton; Guy joined The Misunderstood; and Hugh "went off on his own to experiment". The old recording contract brought them back together when Pete had to record an album, and decided he wanted to have the band on it with him.

"We inhabited the studios for 12 hours, and discovered we'd made an LP." The LP, *The Aerosol Grey Machine*, was released only in America. "That really was what decided us to get together again, although the idea had been in all our heads quite separately."

Keith had joined Juicy Lucy by this time, so they recruited Nic Potter from The Misunderstood on bass, and added David Jackson on alto and tenor saxes and flute after they had heard him with a band led by Chris, Peter's old partner.

This was some four months ago, and already the band has changed greatly. They no longer do material from before the split, and indeed some songs – like the superb "Refugees", which will be their first single – have already been played to what the band consider is exhaustion.

Typical of their honest outlook is their demand, when they were asked to make "Refugees" a single, that they should not be expected to play the song in live performances, because it was no longer a part of their current repertoire.

Peter says: "The old band was very loud and very gross. It was indulgent, and there was no subtlety. Everything was either very quiet or an attempt to blow people's heads off – there was nothing in between. Now it's much more of a dynamic thing – and it's more neurotic, too!"

Guy: "The songs are written for the band now. Before, they were band adaptations of Peter's songs."

Peter: "I can't really think about the audience when I'm by myself and writing a song. If it works, it works."

Thar he blows: David Jackson with alto and tenor saxes as VDGG play the Plumpton Festival, East Sussex, May 24, 1970

Guy: "That's really the approach of the whole band. We often rehearse things and get them completely together, and then we decide not to do them because they're not completely successful in terms of the audience."

Peter: "There's one epic work which lasts 25 minutes lying around somewhere, which we can't do as a band because it's putting down my very personal views of a very personal relationship. I used to do it when I was playing by myself."

Guy: "The band is more a meeting point than a completely self-sufficient unit. We're all different and have our own ideas which at some time we hope to be able to explore. That's not to say that the band is a compromise, because we play together on what we've found to be common ground." ***RICHARD WILLIAMS***

MELODY MAKER 1 MAY, 1971

Melody Maker
Pop's Non-Census
BYRDS TOUR WITH RITA

AN EXTREMELY short story of a ride in Millwall's team coach, Southport laid bare, and what turned out to be a duff Van Der Graaf gig – Dear reader, if only you knew the trials of having to travel to Southport. Not only is it not near Portsmouth, it

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

also exists in a far corner of Lancashire, nay, a far corner of some surrealistic wilderness pocked by sleepy towns, old ladies and a lack of ale houses.

Far from what people think of group life, all gigs aren't at Fillmore West, or on the banks of some sun-drenched lake in Switzerland. In Britain lies our roots, and the Charisma tour has sought out all corners of human existence in this land. The Charisma tours have also brought Van De Graaf to the forefront. The Millwall team coach has never had such longhaired, weird travellers.

It's good that we have run dry of conversation, for the gig is near, night is falling, and another period is arising. The Floral Hall, Southport.

But it seems few people in Southport were aware of the gig, and a mere 300 line the echoing hall.

Hammill hunts around stage during "Killer". He dresses in white, Hugh in a nondescript colour, Guy in red and blonde and Dave in New York blue. It's a rambling, vicious riff, topped by slicing chords. The band have the ability to produce an album on stage, but at times they are a little lethargic. Something's not gelling too good tonight.

Nevertheless, Hammill's voice is an instrument, following the riff, and offering something unique to the voice, seldom found in an instrument – that's failure to reach ambition, the voice is pushed beyond its limits and something raw and wild emerges.

Peter explains that after the violence of "Killer" comes the explosion of "Lost". A hurdy-gurdy opening, Hammill weaves about the stage again. His ability is to hold a mouthful of song, and then plunge downwards with it, taking the band, like a nightmare on the dipper. Jackson breaks out into a spreading disease of rash brass, exploding full of fire. No longer does he sound anything like a saxophonist. It stops every while, gathers texture, and roars. But again, it's not a good gig.

"EVERYTHING WAS EITHER VERY QUIET OR AN ATTEMPT TO BLOW PEOPLE'S HEADS OFF"
PETER HAMMILL

Then a hymn of joy, Hammill on piano, it settles. Evans plays in the air, Banton dabbles, then drifts into neo-church music. It all ends with "Octopus", which writhes and grapples with the air. In the dressing room a casual argument. They all acknowledge a bad gig, work out why it was bad, criticise each other quite strongly. But there's never a loss of temper. It boils, simmers, and develops to a conversation. "Well, we can do better, and we know it. Let's keep it cool, and happy," says Peter.

NOW the scene is a small reading room in a Southport hotel. It's raining, and the rather unkempt-looking figure near the windows shivers and groans. Yet no matter what time you meet drummer Guy Evans, he always looks as though he's just fallen out of bed.

"I played semi-pro at school and university, and had a brief excursion with The Misunderstood – to learn how to be funky. After university I got into lorry driving, and things like that. I couldn't really decide what to do, and had this thought about going to Morocco. Three days before I was to set off, I got this phone call regarding Van Der Graaf. I decided to give it a try."

Guy, who is forever coated with wool cardigans and pumps, wakes up a little, but manages to look the same.

"There's a certain satisfaction with Van Der Graaf, in the fact that we've all really learned to play while we've been together. I'm not saying we couldn't play before; I think Hugh, for instance, has always been amazing, but we've all developed together. As a drummer with a band like this I'm required to change roles a hell of a lot, sometimes I've got to be like a ➢

VDGG at the Royal Festival Hall, London, where they appear along with Audience, East Of Eden and DJ John Peel, June 1, 1970

machine, and then I've got to be dramatic. I'm usually very aware of drums as theatrical things, as dramatic things."

Guy is certainly dramatic. In action he becomes totally obsessed with what's going on. Not only is he full of emotion himself, but that feeling spreads throughout band and audience.

"You can get into emotional playing in all sorts of ways on drums. Peter's songs require drama, and as a drummer you can underplay that, and build up to a very strong effect, like the guy with Procol Harum. It's one thing to play for maximum effect or to be incredibly elaborate – but I use both depending on how I feel."

How much satisfaction does he find with Van Der Graaf? "An awful lot, but wherever you are, you are always aware of what you want next. I think we have all reached a point knowing we can further the band best if we have outlets into different areas, and I hope we can maintain that freedom."

SCENE: a bar typical of nearly all bars on a pier. David Jackson sips grapefruit juice and eyes the sunset. He talks to Hollingworth.

Jackson: "There never has been four walls around this band. We are allowed to work freely on the outside, and really record for who we want. I've been doing things for Brinsley Schwarz, and dug it. They are so groovy to blow with. One day I played footie with them, and then blew with them for nine hours. Finally I had to be dragged away, with my lead still plugged in."

Hollingworth: "Do you ever feel you might get too freaky with electric sax?"

Jackson: "I know I'm far too freaky for most bands. With having to do so much with Van Der Graaf, I wouldn't be able to leave spaces for other players in different units. There's so much freedom with Van Der Graaf, and not as much with other bands. Conclusion: with other bands I'd have to play less."

"WHAT INFLUENCES ORIGINALITY? AND APART FROM THAT, ORIGINALITY IS NO PROOF OF MERIT"

PETER HAMMILL

Hollingworth: "David, are you a freak?"

Jackson: "Yes, but a controlled freak. Van Der Graaf is a band in the true sense of the word. We expand music no end. But at the moment I feel limited to what I can do. Not limited because I can't play enough, well enough, but sometimes when we aren't playing so well. Maybe that's why we change numbers so much.

"There are vast areas in my playing and writing, and only patches are suitable for Van Der Graaf. I mean the stuff I write couldn't possibly be sung, because I use the sax as a voice. My solo track on the album is either going to be an incredible success or a failure. It will be me, and my girlfriend, who's a classical pianist. As for me with the band, well I suppose we are a little fashionable to talk about now."

Hollingworth: "What do you mean 'fashionable'?"

Jackson: "You know what I mean. But I'm glad people are talking about us. I've believed in the music so long, that it's good to see it getting across – it's going to get a lot better as well. We've got to get into new material. I think the next album is going to be another temporary stage. But I know I've never been as emotional as I have with this band."

ORGANIST Hugh Banton is cultured, cool, and rather curly. Like the others he's prone to outbursts of uncontrollable mirth, but if there is a quiet one in the band, it's Hugh.

Banton is a master of sound. He is deeply into electronics, his organ is littered with gadgets. You see, Banton used to be a BBC engineer.

"I've been playing organ since I was 11, and piano since I was seven. I used to play the school organ, and do the services at the school chapel.

"Van Der Graaf have been my one and only group. My brother knew Peter at Manchester, and when the original group organist left, I got the job. I'd had virtually no experience, and in fact used to keep it quiet that I was into folk music. Since then I've found out that my classical training has maybe been too adequate – my technique is dropping off as I become more involved in electrical music. But you see, I am trying to develop an electric organ that sounds like a real pipe organ.

"As a player I wouldn't say I was like anyone in particular. With the band having no guitarist, I find myself usually doing about four things at once, which is often the case in classical music. Because of this similarity, I began to realise what I have lost. I'm hardly influenced by rock as such,

Hugh Banton: "cultured, cool and rather curly" most of my style comes from the way I've been taught. What I do enjoy... is the freedom for us to work outside the band as well as within."

For the next album Banton will also be doing a solo track. "I can see that becoming very strange, as I'm very much into the *2001* thing, you know, throwing away rhythm and melody. If there is to be a step forward in organ playing, then this will be it. I want to build up a complete sound from beginning to end, a thing you won't be able to break down, or pick out parts from. I've got to build that up as I go along." The refined voice of Banton becomes attractive.

THERE'S a Sopwith Camel perched on Peter Hammill's piano, or maybe it's an SE5. I can't see too clearly, because Peter's way down in the studio, and the control room is way up. Whatever, it's a First World War fighter, and Peter sings and growls.

Now Peter Hammill, who wears flat caps from Accrington, is one driving quarter of what is known as Van Der Graaf Generator. Frequently they meet and together make music, live and on album. They are a group, but not a group full stop. With them a group is not a case of four people, a name, and a neat little pigeon-hole. In Hammill's words, Van Der Graaf is a meeting place.

Peter is deep into his solo album; Bob Fripp was round helping the day before. In the studio sit Guy Evans (drums), and Dave Jackson (who blows things). We listen to Peter sing, sing HIS songs, and they are purely songs. They couldn't be done by Generator, and they can be done with Generator. They were songs that had to be done.

In the two years that has led up to the present Generator form, this band have cracked barriers... They are becoming recognised, at last it seems to be working.

Peter has a habit of Accrington caps, bi-plane fighters, football, and laughing. "I don't know what I expected a long time ago. I had no strange illusions, or any particular dreams for the band. I never saw us doing concert tours. The thing that surprised me was the music, it was satisfying, growing – and it didn't offer total satisfaction. Total satisfaction is the death of music. Yet there is satisfaction in seeing people dig it now.

"I guess the best hopes I had were for a hit record, you know, a catchy tune catching on – and that's so divorced from where we are now. The reason for that is that we haven't been accepted before now. So we've had two years to breathe, grow into each other, and now we are here together. For a start a lot of people are writing about us, there are people in the dressing room after gigs, people know our songs, not just popular things like 'Killer', but others."

The band have completed three albums. None have sold particularly well, there have been no singles. But audience reaction has at last reached an excellent level – mainly due to the success of the Charisma tour, cheap prices and good bands. Van Der Graaf now top the bill, and yet if you wanted to put success in terms of figures, sales and what have you, it couldn't be done.

This is now the second phase of the band. A few years ago it formed, didn't really go anywhere, certain people left, and it just about folded. But Hammill's ideas could not be killed, it formed again, and looks like staying together for one hell of a time. Hammill is not the dictator, but undoubtedly the leader.

Peter is the writer. His songs to me are of isolation. "They are really from me, and yes they do dwell with isolation. But that doesn't just mean terror, it can also portray glory, the glory found by one person. We are all God. It doesn't mean to say that the band are perpetually isolated from real life, but it's a pressure.

"We don't have the shadow of that pressure so much in real life. The lifestyle of the band is rather opposed to what we play. We are not so much a band, as a meeting place. We are four musicians. If we had our heads completely away from each other, then the similarities would not be so obvious."

Did Peter think they were vastly original? "Yes, I think we are. The question is what influences originality? And apart from that, originality is no proof of merit. We are giving over what we've got in the best way we can, that is all we can do."

What did he feel about the last album, *H To He...*? "I really dig it, and in fact I really dig the first, *Aerosol*. But I can't judge either objectively, that's impossible. It does something to me, and if it didn't I wouldn't be able to relate. So I'm happy, and so the next album will be better. I wanted to call the band H To He, or Who Am the Only One, meaning that everybody was God, everybody was the Universe. You see, it's an ideas generator."

Many people easily accept Peter's voice wrongly – calling it frail – when in fact he is now attempting to use the voice, not as a perfect vehicle for lyrics, but as an instrument.

"It came to me a bit ago that nobody is singing in an exploratory way. Emotionally they are succeeding, but nobody has attacked the voice as a musician attacks his instrument.

"Now I am trying to find new areas for the voice, maybe areas that it is not intended to do. So maybe at times I'll be selectively destroying my voice. It will be under control, but put beyond the limits of endurance. I can't really talk about it in word terms, because it's only the beginning, but I can see the voice crystallising emotions to a far greater extent.

"The album I am doing on my own is songs that have always been there – as opposed to music, which Van Der Graaf is doing now. I know I'm feeling very lucky at the moment, and I think we all are to be musically with each other. We spark off so many ideas in ourselves. We are poles apart really, but we overlap, and now we have an audience." ● ***ROY HOLLINGWORTH***

Peter Hammill: "So I'm happy, so the next album will be better"

PINK FLOYD

Experiments in the dark sides of sound and space cohere into prog's mightiest concepts, detailing madness, subservience and isolation, and snapping at the hand that fed. *By Peter Watts*

IT was no accident that when the Sex Pistols wanted to advertise their counter-revolution against what they perceived as the bloated vanities of prog rock they chose to do so in T-shirts that boasted "I hate Pink Floyd". Floyd would probably never have recognised themselves as prog, but they helped define, lead and develop much of what was great about the genre: there was their striking sense of musical (and personal) ambition, a fondness for dramatic visuals, classically inspired instrumental passages, psychologically inquisitive lyrics, great artwork, recurring musical and lyrical themes, a striving for some sort of sonic perfection and an interest in extended and connected multi-part suites.

All of this came together on a series of carefully composed and diligently recorded albums, from *The Dark Side Of The Moon* to *The Wall*, that were conceived as thematic and conceptual song cycles rather than song-based collections of whatever they had been messing about with in the studio.

You can get a sense of where they were heading as early as "Interstellar Overdrive" and "Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun", songs that helped create the prog-adjacent space-rock genre. "Pow R Toc H" and "Let There Be More Light" also introduced a feel of weightlessness to the band's music, a sound that was untethered to traditional blues or folk-based concepts of melody and rhythm and subverted the generally accepted pop/rock song structure. This sort of stuff was all over *More* and *Ummagumma* and reached fruition on the first side of *Atom Heart Mother* with what has been described as "the first truly progressive side-long suite". Provisionally titled "The Amazing Pudding" as well as the more appropriate "Untitled Epic", this was the first song to use the new eight-track 20-mic console at Abbey Road, and it featured a series of related parts that utilised a wide variety of sound effects, orchestra, brass band, choir and Rick Wright's keyboards to create a movement, with the rest of the band acting more as a backing track. Sounding as revolutionary as "Interstellar Overdrive" had four years before, "Atom Heart Mother" was arguably a better-realised piece of music than the three more conventional songs that led off side two of its parent album and showed a band with a fuller grasp of their own potential and capabilities.

The *Atom Heart Mother* album concluded with another proggy episode, the 13-minute pseudo-Dada piece "Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast". This three-part instrumental about a roadie making breakfast had some of the playful absurdism beloved by genre protagonists. This combination of avant-garde music and food had previously

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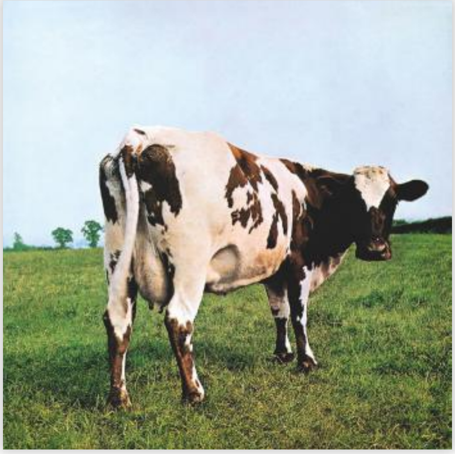
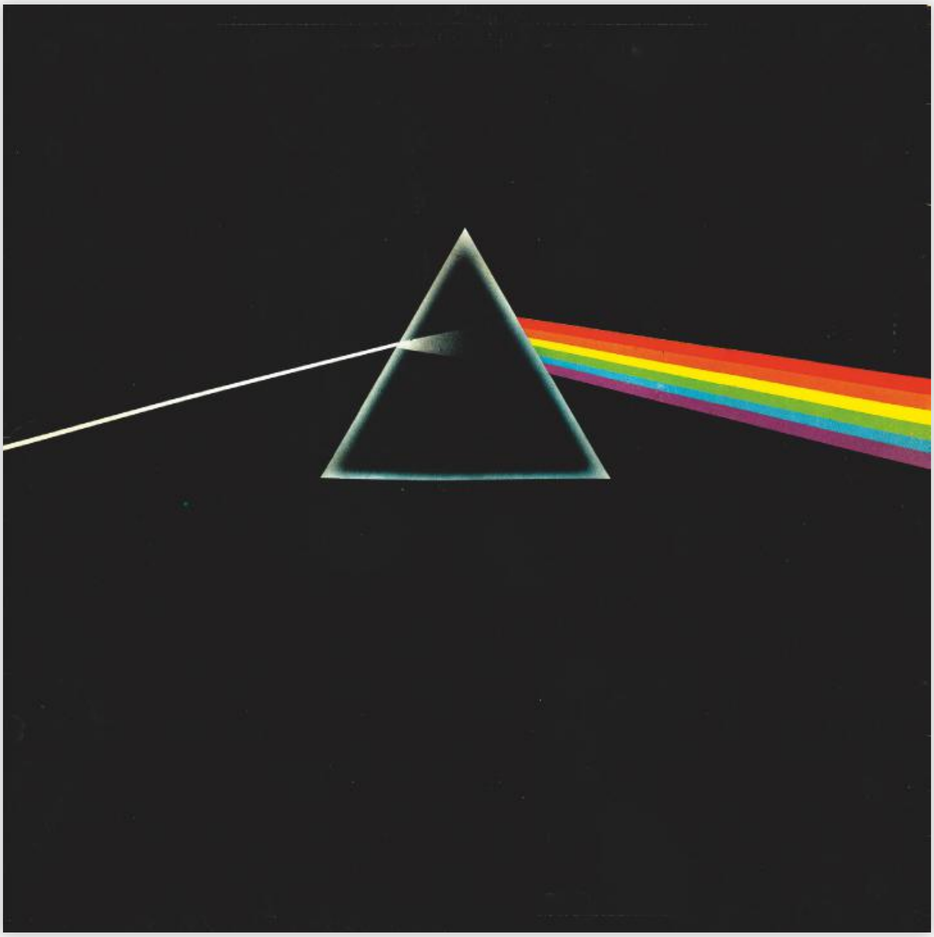
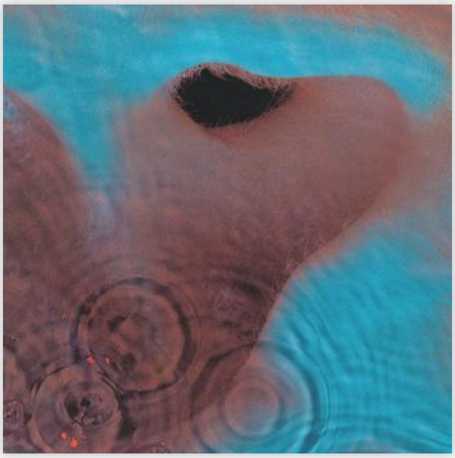
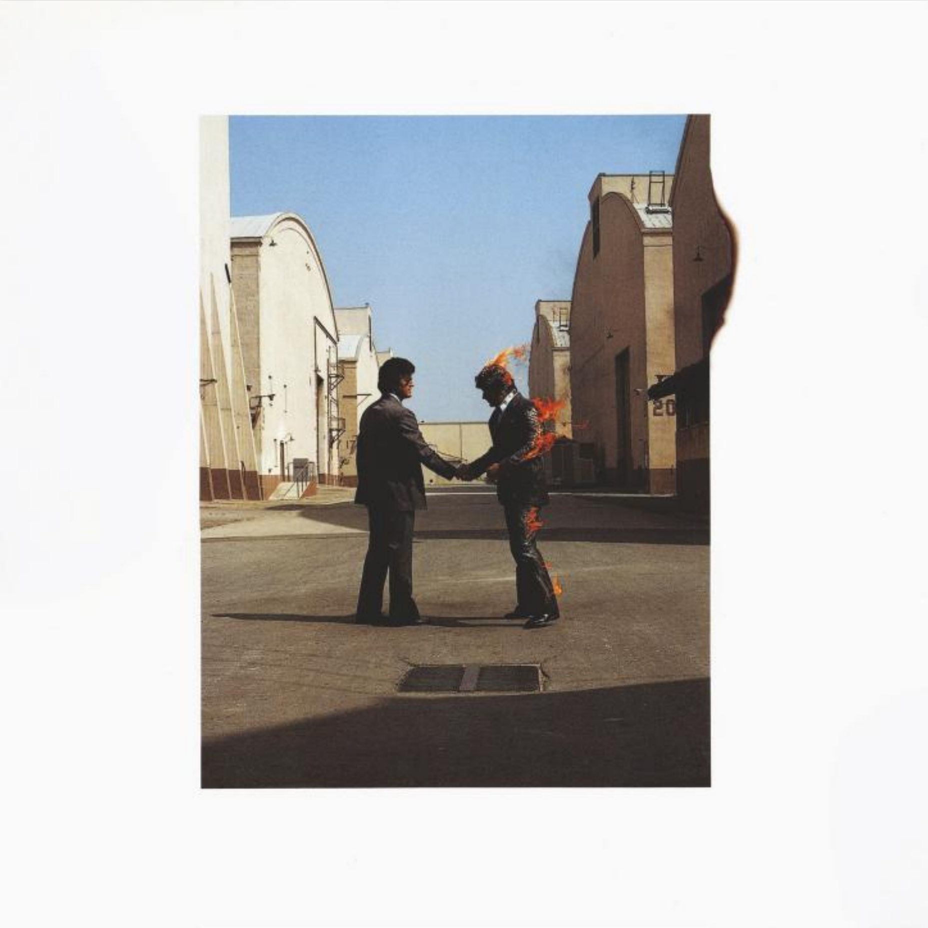
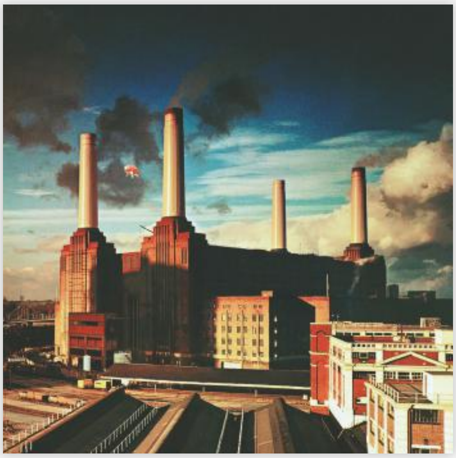
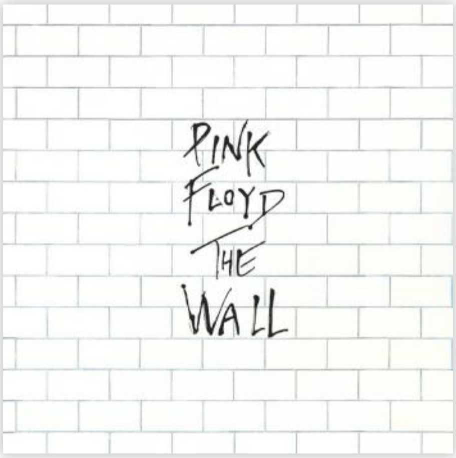












ATOM HEART MOTHER
HARVEST/CAPITOL, 1970
8/10

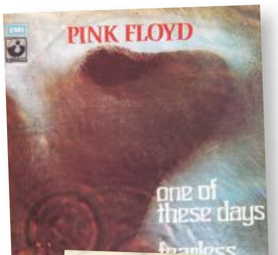
MEDDLE
HARVEST/CAPITOL, 1971
9/10

THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON
HARVEST, 1973
10/10

WISH YOU WERE HERE
HARVEST/COLUMBIA, 1975
8/10

ANIMALS
HARVEST/COLUMBIA, 1977
7/10

THE WALL
HARVEST/COLUMBIA, 1979
10/10



ELECTROLA
MONEY
ANY COLOUR YOU LIKE
Pink Floyd

insinuated its way into the experimental psychodrama *The Man And The Journey*, which was played live a couple of times in 1969 and used excerpts from *More* and *Ummagumma* interrupted by the band taking afternoon tea on stage. Audience reception was mixed.

Much like *The Man And The Journey*, the suite from "Atom Heart Mother" proved difficult to perform live. There were numerous effects, the section timings were complex and the brass band and choirs too expensive to take on the road. But the band's interest in unusual and extraordinary visual spectacle had been an important part of their act since their days at UFO, when psychedelic light shows enhanced the vibe and gave the audience something different to stare at. When it came to recording their first concert film in October 1971, they did so with much of the classical grandiosity that would be associated with prog – albeit with a very Floydian twist. The band went to Italy to perform at the old Roman amphitheatre in Pompeii – but without any audience. Instead, the camera cut away from the band to shots of heads and faces from Roman mosaics and statues, or scenes of oozing lava, bubbling mud, volcanic sludge and steam. Importantly for Floyd, *Live At Pompeii* sounded terrific, with the band bringing over their regular touring gear and a mobile eight-track studio to ensure the sound was as pristine and stereo-friendly as possible.

Live At Pompeii began and ended with sections from "Echoes", another side-long suite. This appeared on 1971's *Meddle* and didn't go quite as far as the "Atomic Heart Mother" suite in terms of choirs, sound effects and orchestration, but instead embraced structural complexity through time and chord changes as well as a variety of effects engineered through the creative use of guitar, piano and amp, such as plugging a wah-wah pedal the wrong way round or utilising tape delay. Partly recorded on 16-track consoles at AIR and Morgan studios as well as Abbey Road's eight-track, "Echoes" would be easier to reproduce on stage than "Atom Heart Mother" and "Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast". There's a sense that the band wanted to find ways to continue pushing boundaries in the studio while also creating something they could perform before an audience.

Slowly but surely, Pink Floyd were working their way towards a masterpiece that would take many of these elements and mould them into a progressive landmark. This was *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, an album that went back to the spacey themes and feel of early Floyd while focusing on a central concept of madness. This was their first fully conceptual album and it embraced many of their strengths and obsessions including the serendipitous beauty of unorthodox noise, delight in experimentation and a need for perfect sound. It was very ambitious, even if it eschewed the "Atom Heart Mother"/"Echoes" idea of extended instrumental suites in favour of more recognisable individual songs. These were then sequenced to produce two continuous pieces of music, one for each side, both telling a related narrative. Importantly, it could be played live – indeed, the band debuted the album in its entirety at the Rainbow a year before it was released – although this did require filling three lorries with nine tons of sound and lighting gear.

Boasting exceptionally proggy cover art by Hipgnosis, *The Dark Side Of The Moon* spoke to many of prog's finest impulses while disregarding some of its more superfluous clichés. Roger Waters was never the sort of man who would write lyrics about pixies, myths, history or poetry. Equally, the band were not given to extended improvised soloing – in fact, the most notable bit of improv came from Clare Torry's fabulous vocals on "The Great Gig In The Sky". Generally speaking, the type of virtuoso musicianship beloved by some leading proggers simply wasn't Floyd's forte but it also wasn't their style – despite the increasing dominance of Waters, Pink Floyd were a collective and they would rather show off their smarts than their chops. These ideas included *Dark Side*...'s use of snippets of conversations, answers to questions written on flashcards and shown to whoever happened to be in the studio at the time. (Paul and Linda McCartney played along, but in a neatly Floydian touch their contributions were rejected for trying too hard.)

Dark Side... was recorded on Abbey Road's new 16-track desk and had a quadraphonic mix by Alan Parsons, which allowed Floyd to experiment with sound and space, most notably when they created the impressive effect of somebody running from speaker to speaker on "On The Run" or the brilliant symphony of coins and cash registers on "Money" – one of the few Floyd songs to experiment with another prog staple, the unusual time signature (in this case 7/4).

Now, *Dark Side*... is seen as monumental and groundbreaking, but at the time members of the band weren't entirely sure about what they had created. It was only when Roger Waters played it to his wife and she was moved to tears that he came to believe in what they had made. "Wow, this is a pretty complete piece of work," he remembers realising, and that desire to create "complete pieces of work" defined Floyd's music for the rest of the decade.

Wish You Were Here was again dictated by a theme devised by Waters, this time looking at the music industry and reflecting Waters' general dissatisfaction with the place the band found themselves in following the spectacular success of *Dark Side*.... *Wish You Were Here* was once more focused around a multi-part

Between two shows in Tokyo, March 1972

KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY

Headlining the Amsterdam Rock Circus at the Olympic Stadium, May 22, 1972

suite, the Syd-inspired “Shine On You Crazy Diamond”, although this was then split in two with one half opening side one and the second half closing side two. There are more solos than usual – notably from David Gilmour – while the symphonic qualities of “Shine On…” and the increased use of Wright’s synths ensured it remains just about on the proggy side of things.

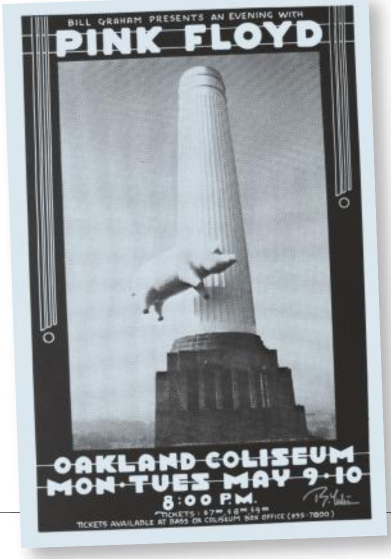
Waters was still in a hell of a bad grump when it came to *Animals*, one of the Floyd’s most curious albums and one better known for the quality of the cover art than the musical content. This featured the beautiful fragment “Pigs On The Wing”, repeated twice to bookend the album, and three longer passages – “Dogs”, “Pigs (Three Different Ones)” and “Sheep”.

An angry response to Britain’s social decay, the prog-punk *Animals* was recorded in the band’s new Britannia Row studio and saw Waters obsessing over ideas of power and authority, and reaching for Orwellian metaphors of animals to explore this theme. It was illustrated with a memorable photograph of an inflatable pig over Battersea Power Station. As a result, Floyd became so associated with pigs that one promoter gave them a piglet as an after-show gift – the terrified animal proceeded to shit all over the hotel room.

Waters had originally commissioned the inflatable pig so it could be taken on 1977’s expansive In The Flesh Tour. This saw Floyd playing *Animals* for the first half and *Wish You Were Here* in the second. The real glory was in the mise-en-scène, as Floyd embraced some of the gimmicky excesses associated with mid-’70s live prog stadium shows. As well as Algie, the inflatable pig from Battersea, there was now an entire inflatable nuclear family and their possessions – pinstripe-suited father, couch-ridden mother, 2.5 children, TV, ’50s Cadillac and a fridge. This collection of balloons was inflated and raised during “Dogs”. At a critical point the fridge door would open and half a dozen fat worms, looking rather like candy-striped penises, would burst forth. Makes you think, eh.

This somewhat judgmental view of modern society and, by association, Waters’ own audience led to Pink Floyd’s final prog masterpiece. *The Wall* saw Floyd repeat and possibly surpass the “complete piece of work” concept that made *Dark Side*… such a success, even though it was written as the band were falling apart. Conceived as musical theatre, *The Wall* had Waters’ usual interest in authority, the music business and insanity but also explored the alienation he had experienced on tour in 1977, represented by a metaphorical wall between the rock star protagonist and the outside world. Tracks like “The Thin Ice” and “Run Like Hell” were pure prog, but there were also sharp standalone singles “Another Brick In The Wall, Part 2” and “Comfortably Numb”.

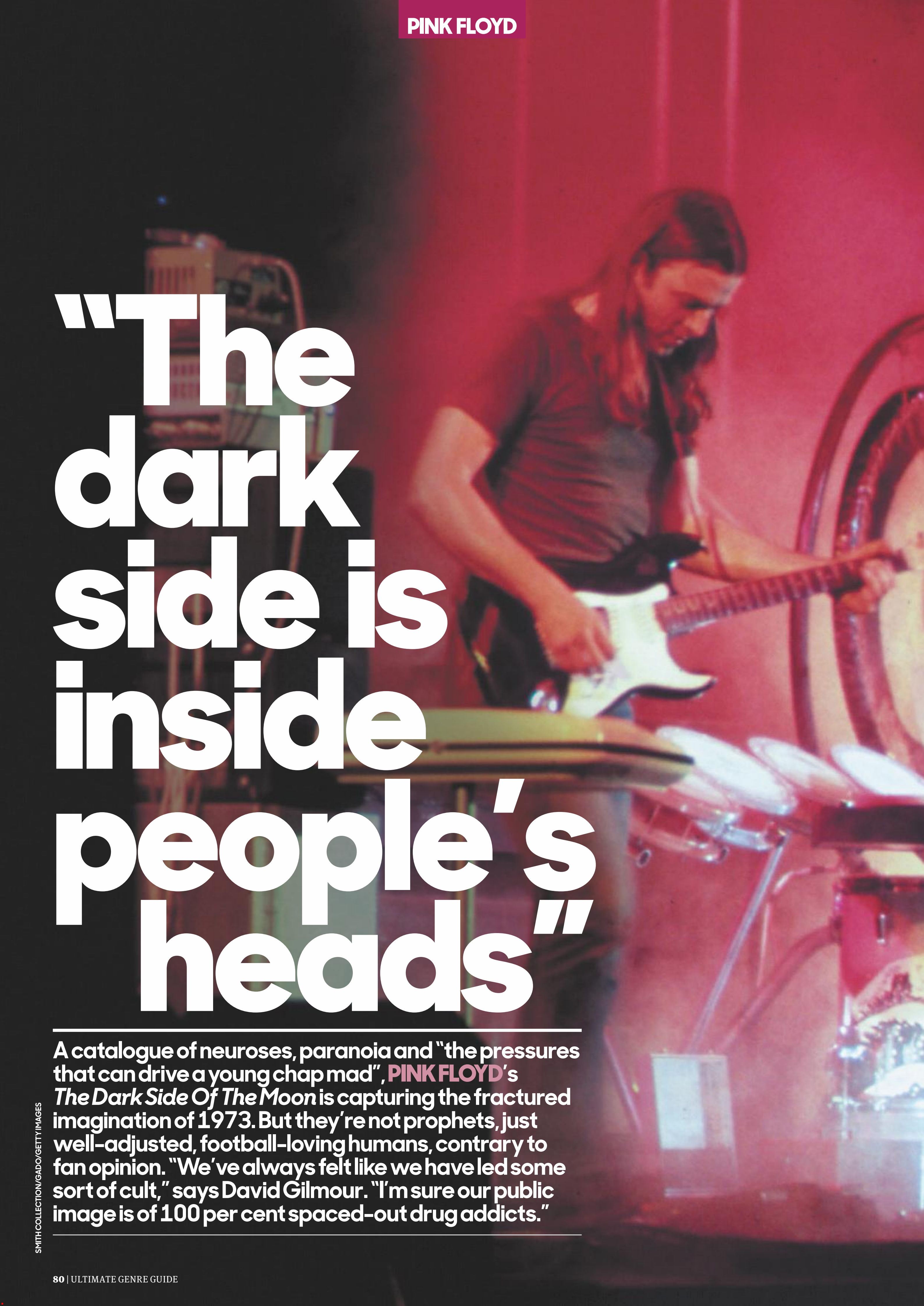
Floyd helped define, lead and develop much of what was great about the prog rock genre



Algie the inflatable pig promotes the 1977 tour

Once more, the ambition was impressive. When taken on tour, a literal physical wall was built between band and audience, which collapsed at the end of the night. There were more of Floyd’s beloved inflatables and nightmarish animations by Gerald Scarfe were projected onto the wall. The project spawned an international No 1 (“Another Brick In The Wall, Part 2”) as well as an Alan Parker feature film featuring Bob Geldof and Bob Hoskins and Scarfe animations. It was a fitting last hurrah for the Waters-Gilmour-Wright-Mason lineup that had dominated the 1970s, releasing some of the most progressive, challenging and plain brilliant music of the era, whatever the genre. ●

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/GETTY IMAGES



"The dark side is inside people's heads"

A catalogue of neuroses, paranoia and "the pressures that can drive a young chap mad", **PINK FLOYD**'s *The Dark Side Of The Moon* is capturing the fractured imagination of 1973. But they're not prophets, just well-adjusted, football-loving humans, contrary to fan opinion. "We've always felt like we have led some sort of cult," says David Gilmour. "I'm sure our public image is of 100 per cent spaced-out drug addicts."

SMITH COLLECTION/GADO/GETTY IMAGES

The power of the dark side: Pink Floyd play Merriweather Post Pavilion in Maryland, June '73

MELODY MAKER MAY 19, 1973

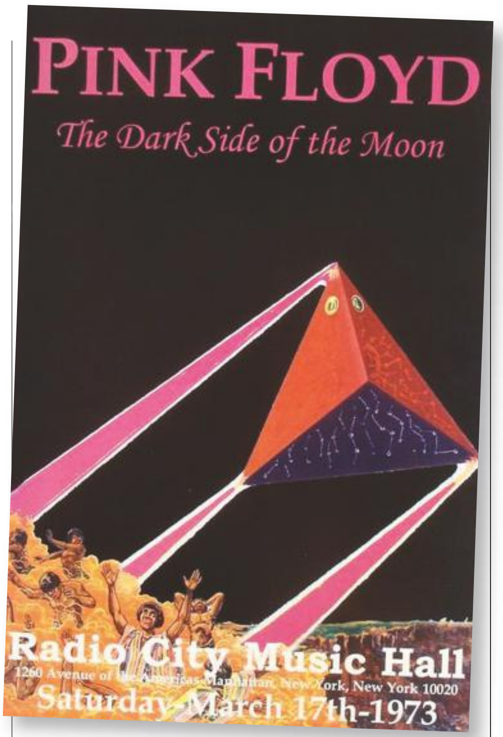
Melody Maker
Bowie blows it!
STRAWBS BUST-UP
Wings
Liza

OH Floyd – wherefore art thou? What lies yonder – on the dark side of the moon? Madness they do say, and present death. In their seventh year together, paranoia and fear seem to haunt their music, despite, or perhaps because of, success. Much of the Pink Floyd's latest album (actually over a year old in terms of studio time) reflects the pressures and obsessions that afflict the itinerate rock musician. Without the lifestyle, there would not be music; and without the music, the lifestyle could not be supported.

Mad laughter and sane voices intermingle in the Floyd's measured, timeless compositions, and it would be easy to read into the characters of the men who make up one of the most original and fulfilling of groups, a kind of omniscience. Fans – and journalists – can and have been disappointed, or surprised, to find that the Pink Floyd are but human. Their output is not prolific, they have been known to repeat material at concerts, they have yet to announce details of any plan to save the world, and what is more, they operate and enjoy taking part in a moderately successful football team.

Time wasted, the curse of money, ambitions unfulfilled, these are all matters that concern the Floyd, and form the basis of many of their musical ideas. They are not esoteric subjects and should be easily assimilated without recourse to mystical interpretation.

Yet even today, the Floyd occasionally feel misunderstood. But they can also feel a tremendous satisfaction in the knowledge that the band said to be "finished" when Syd Barrett left them all those years ago has reached a peak that is impressive even in this age of supergroups. Acceptance of the Floyd's poised and delicate music has never been greater. On their last American tour they casually sold out massive venues from coast to coast; *The Dark Side Of The Moon* has taken world charts in its stride; while their forthcoming London concerts at Earls Court – for charity – sold out as quickly as tickets could be passed over the counter.


PINK FLOYD
The Dark Side of the Moon
Radio City Music Hall
1260 Avenue of the Americas Manhattan, New York, New York 10020
Saturday March 17th-1973

The Floyd have doubtless earned an attractive penny in their time, but unlike many other successful artists, they do not wallow in riches. Rogers Waters lives in a modest house in Islington, where his wife bakes pots in the garden shed. And while David Gilmour lives on a farm in the country, it is through his own efforts that the establishment has been made habitable. He might boast an ornamental pool in the garden, stocked with gaily coloured fish, but he dug it himself.

It was to this rural retreat that I drove one sunny day last week, wending through the fields of Hertfordshire, made fearful by juggernauts wallowing on S-bends and locals driving dented grey Cortinas at speed.

Arriving at the village at the appointed hour, a further 60 minutes were spent following the conflicting directions of rustics pushing bicycles. Still lost, I consulted a map that seemed to have been drawn up in 1932. Hurling this aside, my gaze perceived a fissure in the hedge opposite. It seemed scarcely possible I was parked outside the Gilmour estate and had passed it innumerable times in the last hour.

Such was the case. In a secluded courtyard an alsatian stood guard and a venerable old horse clomped about. A youth in faded blue jeans and straggly black hair appeared like Heathcliffe at the cottage door. "Mr Gilmour's abode?"

"Yes indeed. Come in and have a cup of tea. It will calm you." My motorist's fury began to abate as I drank in the ornate but tasteful décor. Low beams, a jukebox here, wood carvings there – since taking over the abandoned Victorian farmhouse a couple of years ago, the guitarist had worked hard at improvements. When he moved in there was no electricity or heating, and he lived rough as he created an open-plan living area, constructed a music room, dug the aforementioned pool and cleaned out stables for Vim, his retired brewers' dray horse. He had even permitted himself the luxury of a swimming pool, following the satisfactory sale of many of the Pink Floyd albums.

Then came Nemesis, not in the shape of a writer to *Mailbag*, but a man from the council, only minutes before my arrival. He had presented a copy of the council's plans to build a housing estate on the surrounding greenbelt land, and to compulsorily purchase great chunks of the Floydian paradise.

"We'll have to pack our bags and move," he said with hopeless resignation.

Our eyes turned to megalopolis creeping over the horizon, the threatening blocks of Harlow, poised ready to march. We toyed with ideas to build a wall of fire around the premises, to be touched off at an instant the bulldozers arrived, and I suggested sowing landmines in Vim's meadow. Eventually we decided it would be more cheering to speak to the Pink Floyd.

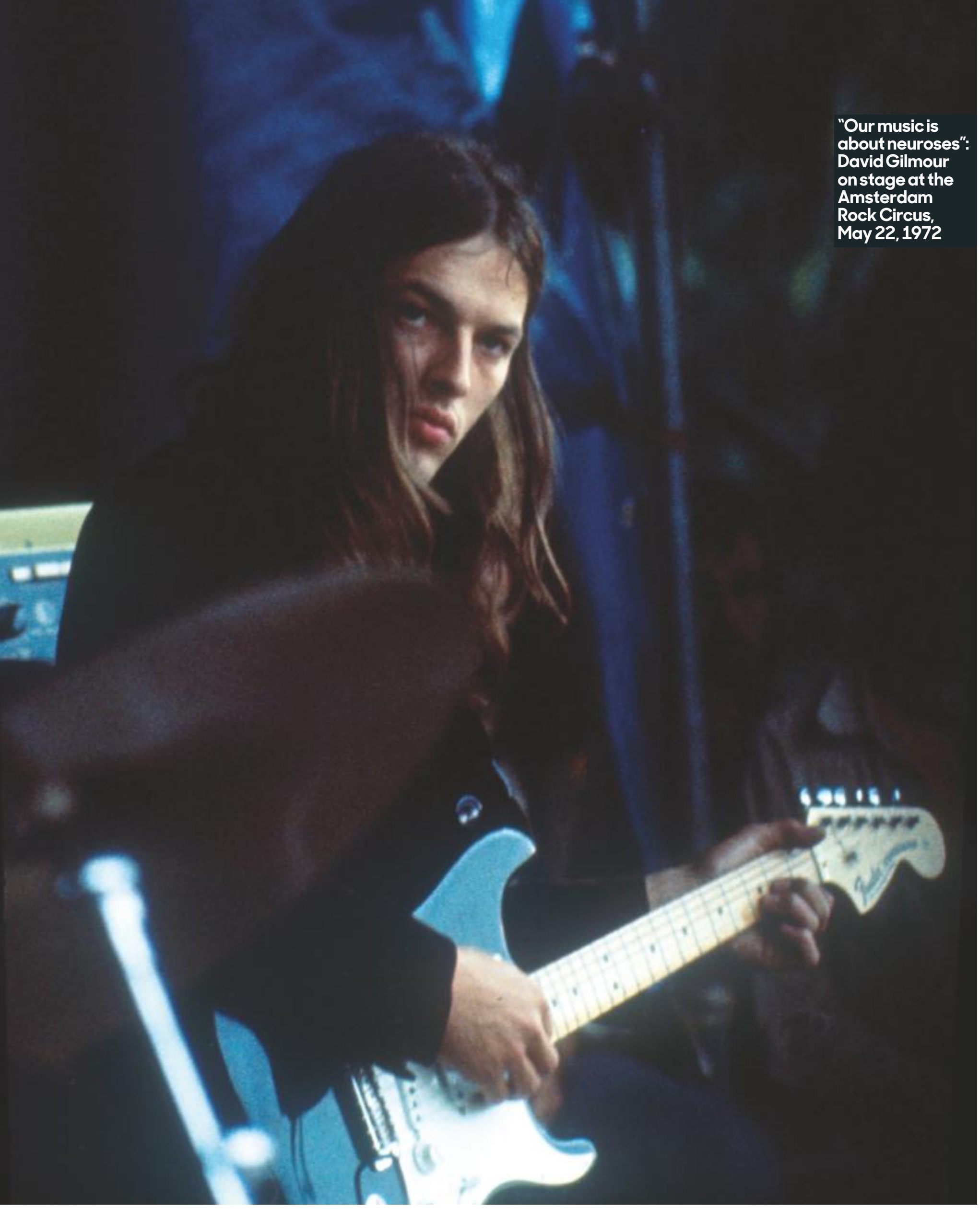
FOR the benefit of new reader George Loaf (12), it should be explained that the group was born in 1967 during the heady days of flower power and UFO. Mr Gilmour replaced the legendary Syd Barrett on guitar, who had written such chart hits as "See Emily Play". The Floyd went through a bleak period when they were written off but quietly drew about them an army of fans, and went about their creative work, wholly unmoved by the shifting fortunes and fashions that affect their contemporaries. They are a proud, pioneering and somewhat detached group who sometimes look upon the cavortings of some of their fellow groups with faint dismay, not out of sour grapes, but from purely aesthetic considerations.

But first, what had the Floyd been doing these last few months, and how long had it taken them to conceive *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, which I believed was their best yet?

"We did the American tour," said Dave. "We only ever do three-week tours now, but that one was 18 dates in 21 days, which is

There was a king who ruled the land: (clockwise from top left) band leader Syd Barrett, Nick Mason, Richard Wright and Roger Waters in 1967

ANDREW WHITTUCK/GETTY IMAGES



"Our music is about neuroses": David Gilmour on stage at the Amsterdam Rock Circus, May 22, 1972

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/GETTY IMAGES

quite hard. We started recording the LP in May last year, and finished it around January. We didn't work at it all the time, of course. We hadn't had a holiday in three years and we were determined to take one. On the whole, the album has a good concept…"

Isn't it their best yet?

"I guess so. A lot of the material had already been performed when we recorded it, and usually we go into the studio and write and record at the same time. We started writing the basic idea ages ago, and it changed quite a lot. It was pretty rough to begin with. The songs are about being in rock'n'roll, and apply to being what we are on the road. Roger wrote 'Money' from the heart."

Money seemed to be a touchy subject for musicians and fans alike. Were the Floyd cynics?

"Oh no – not really. I just think that money's the biggest single pressure on people. Even if you've got it, you have the pressure of not knowing whether you should have it, and you don't know the rights and wrongs of your situation. It can be a moral problem, but remember the Pink Floyd were broke for a pretty long time. We were in debt when I joined and nine months afterwards I remember when we gave ourselves £30 a week, and for the first time we were earning more than the roadies."

For a band that relies on creating moods, good sound was essential for the embryo Floyd.

"We hardly had any equipment of our own. We had a light show, but we had to scrap it for two years. We've had lights again for the last couple of years, but in the meantime we developed the basic idea of the Asimuth co-ordinator. We did a concert at the Festival Hall with the new sound system, and none of us had any idea what we were doing. I remember sitting on the stage for two hours feeling totally embarrassed. But we developed the ideas, and it was purely down to setting moods and creating an atmosphere."

> **"WE THOUGHT IT WAS OBVIOUS WHAT THE LP WAS ABOUT, BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE DIDN'T KNOW"**
> **DAVID GILMOUR**

To digress, what did Dave think of Hawkwind, the newest prophets of the UFO tradition?

"I don't ever listen to them, but they seem to be having jolly good fun," said Dave without the trace of a smile.

What about The Moody Blues?

"I'm not too keen on The Moody Blues. I don't know why – I think it's all that talking that gets my goat. It's a bit like poets' corner."

Dave did not want to be drawn on the subject of rivalry, but he did admit to hearing with pleasure that an expensive piece of equipment belonging to another group had collapsed. The group had recently tried to poach the Floyd's road crew.

Looking back over his six years or so with the group, what milestones did he see in their development?

"There haven't been any particular milestones. It's all gone rather smoothly. We've always felt like we have led some sort of cult here, but in America it's been slow but sure. This year in the States it's been tremendous, but I can't say why – specifically. We have been able to sell out 10-15,000 seaters every night on the tour – quite suddenly.

"We have always done well in Los Angeles or New York but this was in places we had never been to before. Suddenly the LP was No 1 there and they have always been in the forties and fifties before.

"No – success doesn't make much difference to us. It doesn't make any difference to our output, or general attitudes. There are four attitudes in the band that are quite different. But we all want to push forward and there are all sorts of things we'd like to do. For Roger Waters it is more important to do things that say something. Richard Wright is more into putting out good music, and I'm in the middle with Nick. I want to do it all, but sometimes I think Roger can feel the musical content is less important and can slide around it.

"Roger and Nick tend to make the tapes or effects like the heartbeat on the LP. At concerts we have quad tapes and four-track tape machines. So we can mix the sound and pan it around. The heartbeat alludes to the human condition and sets the mood for the music, which describes the emotions experienced during a lifetime. Amidst the chaos there is beauty and hope for mankind. The effects are purely to help the listener understand what the whole thing is about.

"It's amazing… at the final mixing stage we thought it was obvious what the album was about, but still a lot of people, including the engineers and the roadies, when we asked them, didn't know what the LP was about. They just couldn't say – and I was really surprised. They didn't see it was about the pressures that can drive a young chap mad.

"I really don't know if our things get through, but you have to carry on hoping. Our music is about neuroses, but that doesn't mean that we are neurotic. We are able to see it, and discuss it. *The Dark Side Of The Moon* itself is an allusion to the moon and lunacy. The dark side is generally related to what goes on inside people's heads – the subconscious and the unknown.

"We changed the title. At one time, it was going to be called *Eclipse*, because Medicine Head did an album called *Dark Side Of The Moon* but it didn't sell well, so what the hell. I was against *Eclipse* and we felt a bit annoyed because we had already thought of the *Dark* title before Medicine Head came out. Not annoyed at them, but because we wanted to use the title. There are a lot of songs with the same title. We did one called 'Fearless' and Family had a single called that."

Did the Floyd argue among themselves much?

"A fair bit, I suppose, but not too traumatic. We're bound to argue because we are all very different. I'm sure our public image is of 100 per cent spaced-out drug addicts, out of our minds on acid. People do get strange ideas about us. In ➢

***Dark Side*-era publicity shots: (l-r) Waters, Wright, Gilmour, Mason**

San Francisco we had a reputation from the Gay Liberation Front: 'I hear you guys are into Gay Lib'; I don't know how they could tell..."

As a guitarist Dave had been somewhat overshadowed by the Floyd's strong corporate image. But his virile, cutting lines are one of their hallmarks and a vital human element. Did he ever fancy working out on a solo album, or forming a rock trio?

"I get all sorts of urges but really nothing strong. Put it down to excessive laziness. No I don't do sessions. I don't get asked. Any frustrations I might have about just banging out some rock'n'roll are inevitable, but are not a destructive element to our band. I have a lot of scope in Pink Floyd to let things out. There are specially designated places where I can do that."

In the past the Floyd have been subject to criticism, not the least appearing in the *Melody Maker*. How do they react to that?

"React? Violently! People tend to say we play the same old stuff – that we do the same numbers for years. We don't. We are playing all new numbers now, except for 'Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun'. The Who are still playing 'My Generation' and nobody complains about that. We can take criticism when it's valid, but we are only human and we can only do so much. Sometimes it surprises me when we play really well, and spend some time on presenting a special show, like we did at Radio City in New York, and we get knocked.

"Some people dislike the basic premise of what we are all about. Then their criticism is a waste of time. For someone to criticise you who understands you, and can say where you have fallen down – that's valid. There are some people who come to our shows with no real interest in what we are doing, don't like the group, so don't like the concert. We put all the bad reviews into a little blue book."

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

"THERE'S HUMOUR IN OUR MUSIC, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF ANY OF IT GETS THROUGH"

DAVID GILMOUR

This time Dave was smiling. (Geo. Loaf, please note. Musician's joke: Gilmour does not really have a 'little blue book'. He was speaking lightly, in fun.)

"I remember after Mick Watts did his piece on us, we all gave him a complete blank in an aeroplane. It wasn't deliberate. We just didn't recognise him. But he made some snide remark in the *MM*, so we sent him a box with a boxing glove inside on a spring. Nick got them specially made. But it wasn't taken in good humour. Syd Barrett would never have done a thing like that. All very childish really.

"We don't get uptight at constructive reviews, but when somebody isn't the smallish piece interested in what you are doing, then it's no help to them or to us. We did get uptight at what Mick Watts said – it was very savage. But you can't stay angry for long. We tried to turn the feud into a kind of joke with the boxing glove. You've got to have a sense of humour," said Dave scowling into his tea. "There's humour in our music, but I don't know if any of it gets through."

As a key member of a band with its gaze fixed firmly on the future, it seemed unlikely Dave would want to reminisce, yet he was happy enough to recall their origins.

"Nick Mason had got a date sheet 10 yards long with all the gigs in red ink – every one since 1967. It's quite extraordinary when you look at the gigs we got through – four or five a week. We couldn't do that now, not when you think of the equipment we carry. The roadies have to be there by eight in the morning to start setting up. It's a very complicated business. Things still go wrong, but we virtually carry a whole recording studio around with us all the time.

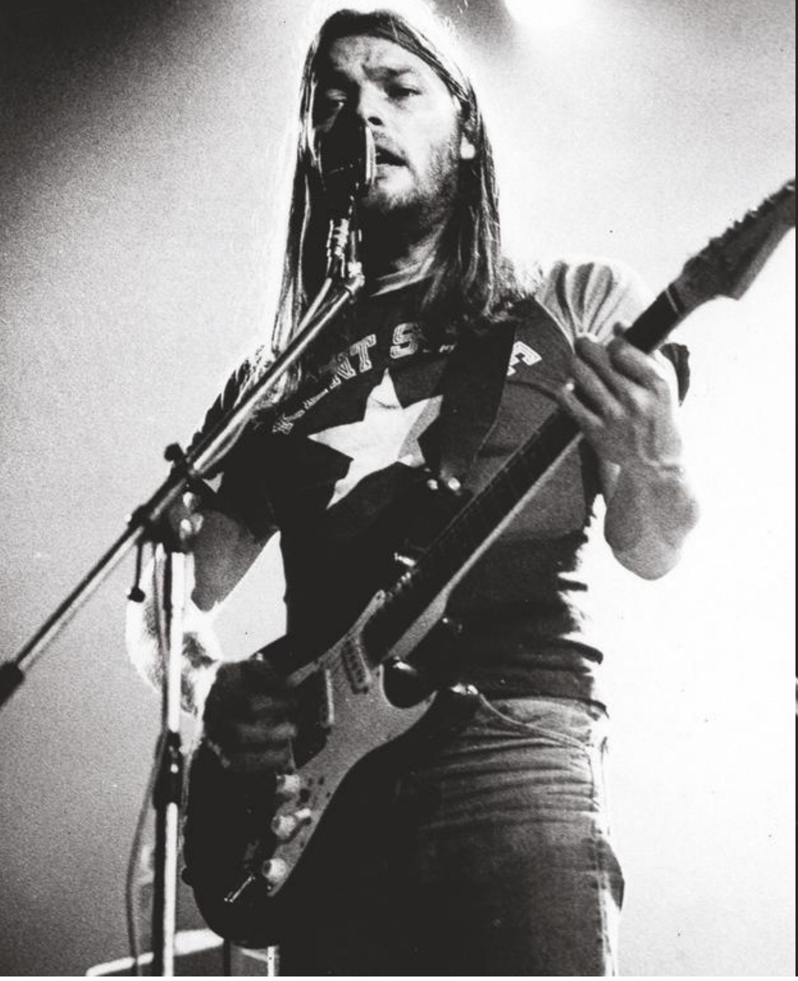
"In 1967 no-one realised that sound could get better. There was just noise, and that's how rock'n'roll was. As soon as you educate people to something better, then they want it better – permanently. PAs were terrible in those days – but we've got an amazing one now.

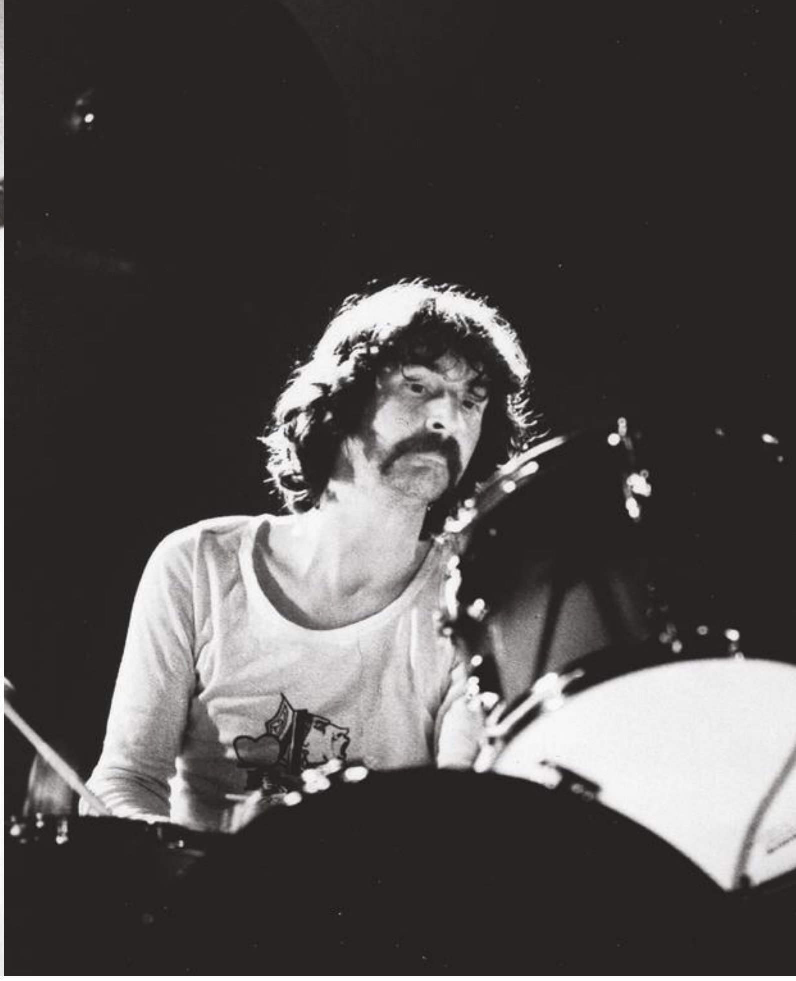
"Before we do a gig, we have a four-page rider in our contract with a whole stack of things that have to be got together by the promoter. We have to send people round two weeks beforehand to make sure they've got it right, otherwise they don't take any notice.

"There have to be two power systems, for the lights and PA. Otherwise the lighting will cause a buzz through the speakers. Usually a stage has to be built – to the right size. We've got 11 tons of equipment, and on our last American tour it had to be carried in an articulated truck. Oh yes, it's the death of rock'n'roll. Big bands are coming back.

"There was a long period of time when I was not really sure what I was around to do, and played sort of back-up guitar. Following someone like Syd Barrett into that band was a strange experience. At first I felt I had to change a lot and it was a paranoic experience. After all, Syd was a living legend, and I had started off playing basic rock music – Beach Boys, Bo Diddley, and "The Midnight Hour". I wasn't in any groups worth talking about, although I had a three-piece with Ricky Wills, who's now with Peter Frampton's Camel.

"I knew Syd from Cambridge since I was 15, and my old band supported the Floyd on gigs. I knew them all well. They asked me if I wanted to join





when Syd left, and not being completely mad, I said yes, and joined in Christmas '68. I later did the two solo albums with Syd. God, what an experience. God knows what he was doing. Various people have tried to see him and get him together, and found it beyond their capabilities.

"I remember when the band was recording 'See Emily Play', Syd rang me up and asked me along to the studio. When I got there he gave me a complete blank. He was one of the great rock'n'roll tragedies. He was one of the most talented people and could have given a fantastic amount. He really could write songs and if he had stayed right, could have beaten Ray Davies at his own game.

"It took a long time for me to feel part of the band after Syd left. It was such a strange band, and very difficult for me to know what we were doing. People were very down on us after Syd left. Everyone thought Syd was all the group had, and dismissed us. They were hard times. Even our management Blackhill believed in Syd more than the band. It really didn't start coming back until *Saucerful Of Secrets* and the first Hyde Park free concert.

"The big kick was to play for our audiences at Middle Earth. I remember one terrible night when Syd came and stood in front of the stage. He stared at me all night long. Horrible!

"The free concerts were really a gas. The first one had 5,000 people and the second had 150,000. But the first was more fun. We tried to do two more singles around this time, but they didn't mean a thing. They're now on the *Relics* album."

Where lay the future for Floyd?

"God knows. I'm not a prophet. We have lots of good ideas. It's a matter of trying to fulfil them. It's dangerous to talk about ideas, or you get it thrown at you when you don't do it. We have vague ideas for a much more theatrical thing, a very immobile thing we'd put on in one place. Also we want to buy a workshop and rehearsal place in London. We've been trying to get one for some time.

"No, we don't want our own label – but we do have our own football team! We beat Quiver nine-one recently, and now there's talk of a music industries' cup. Oh – and we played the North London Marxists. What a violent bunch. I bit my tongue – and had to have stitches."

So that's what lies on the dark side of the moon – a pair of goalposts. But the Floyd will be all right – as long as they keep their heads. ***CHRIS WELCH***

NME MAY 19, 1973

FLOYD/FACES

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

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What went wrong?

HAWKWIND: Problems resolved

"DON'T take any pictures of me outside the house," says David Gilmour, making a quick, impatient gesture like brushing away flies. "I can't stand the pop-star-in-his-country-house syndrome."

Sure, David, but in the broadest sense you are a pop star. And when you're the guitarist for famous, best-selling Pink Floyd, and you've made as many decent albums as Pink Floyd have, and you've gone the whole route long ago, and you've still got your wits about you, and the money keeps rolling in, what else is there to spend the bread on?

And it has to be said that Dave Gilmour's spent his allotted share of the Floyd takings in a manner befitting one of the most tasteful bands of our time. His Essex mock-Tudor residence positively screams good taste – the real sort, not Ghastly Good Taste – and is conspicuous for its lack of middle-class accoutrements.

All rooms are in that happy state of disarray that comes from a relaxed lifestyle, the world is fenced out by a high hedge and the BMW in the garage and the swimming pool out back give off identical expensive glints.

Gilmour, wearing a T-shirt that says "Didn't they do well" in sewn-on white letters, is lounging in a rocking chair in front of a gorgeous, ornate, teak altar-screen that just radiates antiquity.

This morning though, despite the surrounding comforts and the presence of his lady at his side to succour him, the Floyd guitarist is in a somewhat fragile state, having visited the Marquee the previous evening (in the company of Roger Waters) to catch Roy Buchanan's set.

He's a little tired and he may, or may not, have been a little inebriated the night before – he can't quite remember. Anyway, it isn't important because this is the first interview he's done for ages and neither of us can quite remember the procedure and there's a lot to get through before lunchtime ennui sets in.

First off, David, congratulations on finally attaining the exalted No 1 spot in the States with *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. A slow smile spreads across the Gilmour face.

"Yes, it is nice, isn't it? We've never really been above fortieth position before – but, even so, we're still selling more albums there than we would in the English charts."

He's reluctant to be pinned down as to why this should suddenly happen, after five years of being a cult band in America ("I suppose we've always had this sort of underground image over there"), and he's even more reluctant to define what Floyd's appeal is in the States, or even what type of audiences the group attract. In fact, he doesn't seem particularly interested in anything, taking the whole process with a combination of affable ennui and the tiniest hint of indifference.

"I don't think it'll make any change – I mean, we've never had any problem selling out even the largest halls and I don't really see how that can change. We can still sell out the Santa Monica Civic two nights in succession and I'm not sure that the album will make any difference to that."

Nonetheless, one is aware that perhaps the success of *Dark Side*… took the band a little by surprise, as no tour has been planned to actually coincide with the peaking of the album. Though they are off again in June. Anyway…

Tea arrives and conversation briefly returns to the Marquee, where Gilmour had been spotted a couple of weeks ago. He seems to be a regular denizen. "In fact, I was down there that night to see Quiver."

Gilmour was, at one time, a member of a group which included one of the present Quiver lineup, and Gilmour takes an interest in the group's progress.

An interesting sidelight is his reference to Floyd as – "this band – I've been five years in this band" – as if he expected Floyd to finish tomorrow; and then you realise that he's first and foremost a musician and the lead guitar chair in Pink Floyd is just another gig.

Floyd may one day disappear but Gilmour intends to keep right on playing…

Back to *Dark Side*…, and I advance the hypothesis that the album shows a marked return to solid purpose that, for me, had been somewhat lacking in Floyd's last three or so albums, good though they've been individually. Gilmour ponders this.

"I suppose so. Certainly there's a sort of theme running through it which we haven't really done for a long time. There's two opinions about this in the group – half of us wanted to play a thematic piece, the other half wanted to play a collection of songs."

Which half did he belong to? A reappearance of the slow smile. "I didn't object, anyway. It's basically Roger's idea. We'd all written songs beforehand, and then Roger got the theme and the words together."

I point out that, for the first time, the band have considered album lyrics important enough to print on the sleeve. "Yes, I generally don't like sleeve lyrics." End of subject.

The theme behind *Dark Side*… is, of course, the various pressures that can drive one mad – "pressures directed at people like us, like money, travel, and so on".

I remark that the piece has changed markedly since I saw it premiered at the Rainbow in 1972. Gilmour agrees, mentioning that the entire show had been on the road for about six months before the group took the project into the studio.

"HALF OF US WANTED TO PLAY A THEMATIC PIECE, THE OTHER HALF WANTED TO PLAY SONGS"

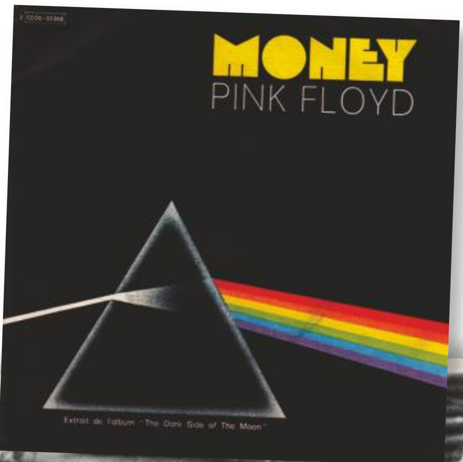
DAVID GILMOUR

"Normally, we go into the studio, often without any concrete ideas, and allow the circumstances to dictate the music."

Sometimes, though, this results in filler tracks (for example, the jokey sides on *Ummagumma* and *Atom Heart Mother*) and besides, isn't it an expensive way to record? "No. We don't pay. EMI do."

Another marked feature of the album is Gilmour's own blossoming into a tough, bluesy player – especially on "Money", which features several verses of really hard, spectacular licks.

Gilmour shrugs this off modestly, although Ginger, his lady, chimes in with her agreement that it represents Gilmour at his best. He thinks some of his playing on *Obscured By Clouds* is better, but concedes that "Money" was designed as basically a guitar track.



Other features from *Dark Side*…'s live performance are also missing – noticeably the taped finale, which uses extracts from the Collected Rantings of Malcolm Muggeridge. "Yes. Well, you didn't really expect we'd get his permission, did you?"

He confesses that he never really listens to Floyd albums, and he's reluctant to assess them in retrospect – but I detect a leaning towards *Obscured By Clouds*, which he has been known to direct into the garden on a summer's day. Others? Well, he likes some of the tracks on *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, mainly the title track and "Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun".

Atom Heart Mother he admits to having been an experiment, not a new direction, and he would record it completely differently now, had he the chance or the inclination.

"The trouble was, we recorded the group first and put the brass and the choir on afterwards. Now, I think I'd do the whole thing in one take. I feel that some of the rhythms don't work and some of the syncopations aren't quite right."

Another period which Floyd dabbled in, but which didn't really communicate itself to our ears via concrete Floyd music, was their flirtation with the French avant-garde and with ballet.

"In fact, we did that ballet for a whole week in France. Roland Petit choreographed it to some of our older material… but it's too restricting for us. I mean, I can't play and count bars at the same time. We had to have someone sitting on stage with a piece of paper telling us what bar we were playing…

"We also did the music for *More*. We hadn't done film scores before, but they offered us lots of money. We wrote the whole thing in eight days from start to finish.

"We did *Zabriskie Point* for Antonioni, and in fact we wrote much more than he eventually used. I feel, even now, that it would have been better if he'd used most of what we'd written."

I put it to Gilmour that these wanderings from the band's direct line of progression have been received by fans with disappointment.

He gets a little heated. "That's the trouble – you can't really break out of the progression-from-your-last-LP rut. People's minds are set to expect something and if you don't provide it, well…"

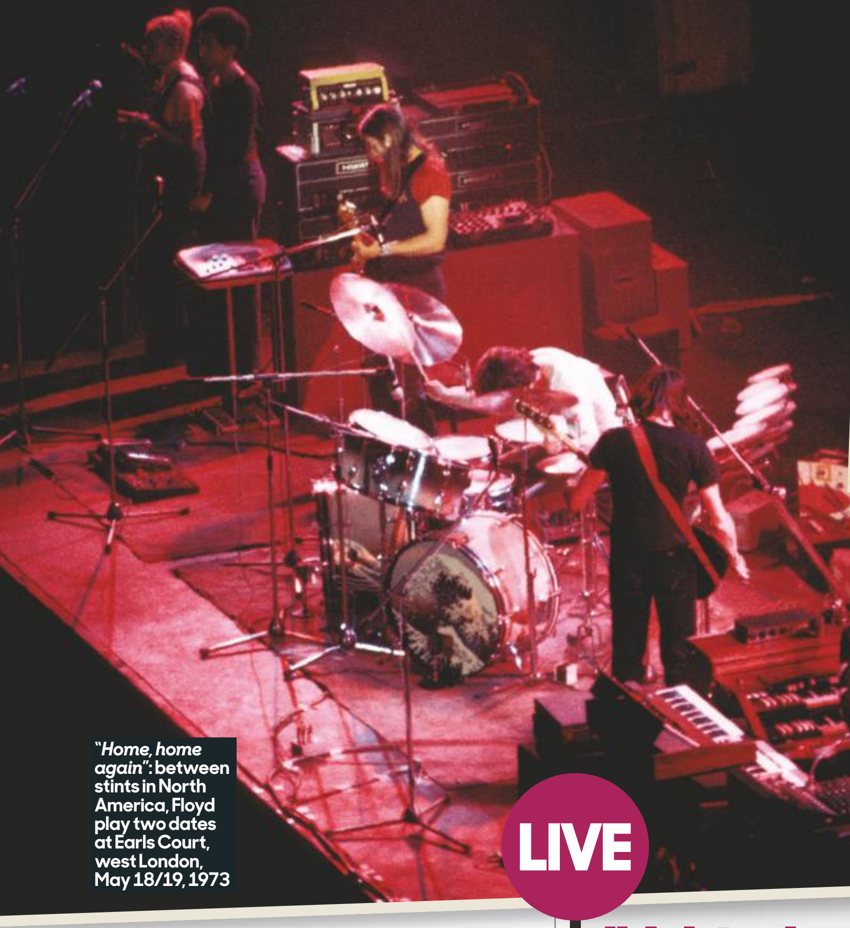
Many Floyd aficionados still feel that *Ummagumma* was the group's high point. Gilmour disagrees. "For me, it was just an experiment. I think it was badly recorded – the studio side could have been done better. We're thinking of doing it again."

But we don't have time to explore the meaning behind that because now it's time for Gilmour to show off his music room and, for the first time since this interview began, he comes to life.

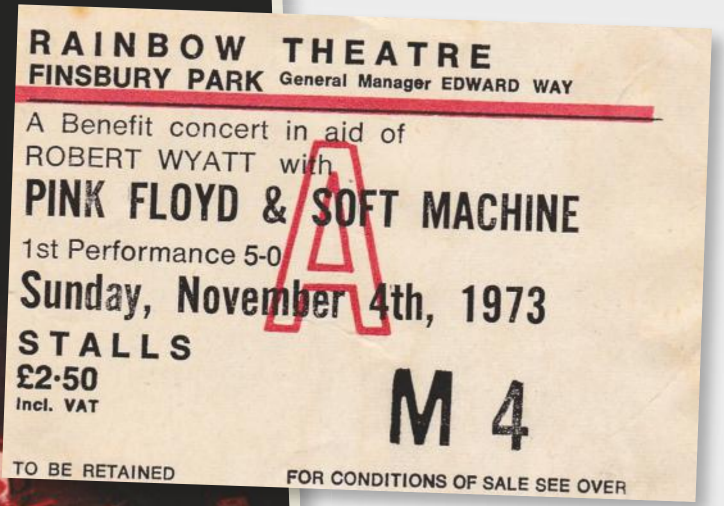
Earlier, he'd told us that his opinion of the music press was that it was, well, irrelevant to Pink Floyd ("We don't really need the music press and they don't really need us") and his attitude during the interview had been one of mild

One for the money: Floyd circa 1973

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES



"Home, home again": between stints in North America, Floyd play two dates at Earls Court, west London, May 18/19, 1973



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amusement coupled with disbelief at the workings of the journalistic mind. But when we cross the carpet and enter the little room full of electronic equipment, he becomes a New Man.

Most private music rooms I've seen have been sterile, formal places, not, in my opinion, suited vibewise to the creative process – but Gilmour's is lived-in and it works. The usual tape recorders and eight-track stuff are there but there's also a drumkit (Nick Mason's? "No, mine"), about 12 guitars, ranging from a Strat through a '59 Les Paul Custom to a Les Paul Junior hanging on the wall, a Les Paul-type electric guitar ("custom-made, naturally") and a beautiful classical guitar ("custom-made, naturally").

But pride of place goes to the newest toy, a special synthesiser made by EMS (who make the VCS3), which, Gilmour assures us, is not on the market and never will be. He plugs in the Strat and this device, rather like a plastic pulpit with pedals mounted underneath, gives off some of the most incredible sounds we've ever heard. And that includes every Pink Floyd album.

There's a fader that lowers the note an octave, a whining fuzz device which couples into that, and, most uncanny of all, a phase "Itchycoo Park"-type effect that resembles a Phantom doing a ground strike somewhere in South East Asia. Believers, you're in for some hair-raising sounds when Gilmour gets this weapon on the road, as he says he intends to.

Looking at David Gilmour as he coaxes these apocalyptic noises from his guitar, one can see why he and the rest of Pink Floyd feel remote from the workings of the music business.

Gilmour in our interview never really came to life because he hasn't any stake in successful musicbiz rapport with the press – but he's said more about Pink Floyd in 30 seconds of divebombing with the Strat and the Synthi Hi-Fli than all the interviews in the world would ever do. And, really, isn't that what it's all about? ●

TONY TYLER

LIVE

"A kind of rock son et lumière"

PINK FLOYD/SOFT MACHINE: RAINBOW THEATRE, LONDON

MELODY MAKER NOVEMBER 10, 1973

Melody Maker
DYLAN BAND HIT THE ROAD!

PINK FLOYD and Soft Machine stunned fans with two sensational shows at London's Rainbow Theatre on Sunday night. It was a splendid evening of rock-co-operation, in which both groups gave their services in aid of disabled drummer Robert Wyatt.

Compere John Peel was pleased to announce that some £10,000 was raised. He said that Robert intended to carry on with a singing and recording career. The ex-Softs drummer was not present but was acknowledged by cheers from the audience.

As two complex shows were performed on the same night, there were lengthy delays between sets... When the Softs finally came on for the second house, they were still dogged by sound problems. From my position near the right-hand bank of speakers, only John Marshall's superb drumming could be heard with any clarity, although the combined keyboard riffs of Karl Jenkins and Mike Ratledge wove an insidious pattern of great power and menace.

The Softs employed a cataract of sound in which improvised solos seemed of less significance perhaps than the overall blitzkrieg, but John's drums employed a fascinating range of tones, and his attack was at times frightening.

There were no problems affecting the Floyd however, and they presented one of the best concerts seen this year; certainly one of the most imaginative and cleverly executed.

The Dark Side Of The Moon, their last album, was the main basis of operations, and the Floyd faultlessly combined quadrophonic sound, prerecorded tapes, lights, smoke and theatrical effects into a kind of rock son et lumière.

There were many shocks and surprises along the way, and not having seen the Floyd for some time, I was frequently pinned back in my seat or ejected into the aisles, heart beating wildly.

Heartbeats in fact commenced proceedings, pulsating through the auditorium and stilling the more excitable elements in the crowd. Clocks ticked mysteriously and with perfect precision the Floydmen slotted their live instruments into the recorded sound.

The Floyd have a tremendous sense of pace. Occasionally they seem to overstate a theme or extract the last ounce from an idea, but the total effect is like coral growing on the seabed, establishing something deep, eternal and occasionally flashing with colour.

Overhead was suspended a huge white balloon to represent the moon, on which spotlights played, and not long after the performance began, searchlights began to pierce the gloom.

Meanwhile the music continued apace, Nick Mason excelling with his terse, economical drums, hammering home the heavy stuff where required, and tastefully bringing down the volume whene'er a new tack or shift in course was signalled.

Dave Gilmour has one of the most difficult guitar jobs in rock, having to contain his own exuberance for the benefit of the greater whole, but making every note felt on his own inventive solos. Dave was particularly effective on the funky "Money", which should have been a single hit for t'lads.

Rick Wright's keyboards were immensely tasteful and melodic, gently spurred by Roger Waters' mighty bass lines. Instrumentally the Floyd are a finely tuned mechanism that surges ahead like an armoured cruiser, oblivious to the smoke of battle.

Indeed the band were enveloped in smoke throughout the performance, glowing red lights adding to the illusion of inferno and hellfire. A choir of ladies cooed like angels of mercy and as a silver ball reflecting myriad beams of light began to revolve and belch more smoke, the audience rose to give them an ovation. They deserved a Nobel prize or at least an Oscar.

CHRIS WELCH

STEVE MORLEY/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

MIKE OLDFIELD

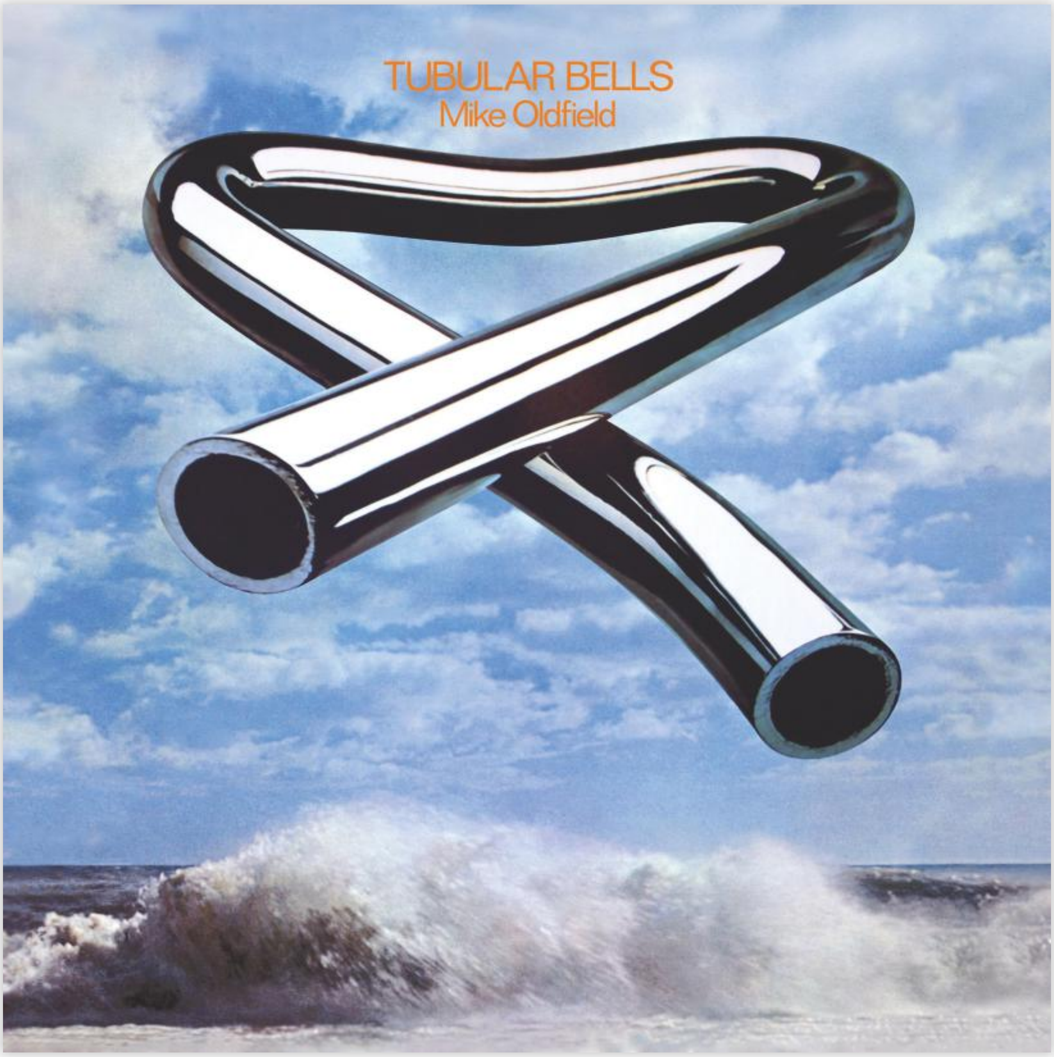
Tubular Bells resounds across the globe, and propels a reluctant superstar towards paganism and disco. *By David Quantick*

FOR many reasons, progressive rock is often best suited to the group format – all those time changes, feats of virtuosity and the sheer stamina required to play the stuff suggests the advisability of a team effort as well as some other men to help with the heavy lifting: so much so that when someone from prog goes solo – normally a former member of Genesis – their new direction is often snappier, poppier, trimmer of hair and lapel and much more portable.

Mike Oldfield is the exception: while his career as a multi-layering studio genius, releasing largely instrumental albums (Richard Branson begged him to put vocals on *Tubular Bells*) – and making records whose complexity and scope takes them far away from the New Age slop they're sometimes lumped in with – has taken him into poppier directions, Oldfield has remained one of the few solo artists who has always returned to his concept album roots. With at least four variants on *Tubular Bells* in his back catalogue, as well as one brilliant revisit of another '70s classic, Mike Oldfield may dress like his former Virgin label boss and enjoy a similar lifestyle (to which this writer can attest, having once had a go on Oldfield's jetski in the sea near his Ibiza home), but musically at least he remains the introspective outsider who created *Tubular Bells* in 1973.

Born in 1953 in Reading, Mike Oldfield had a troubled home life, escape from which was provided by his sister Sally, a brilliant singer who took her teenaged brother on the road with her. The Oldfields formed a duo, The Sallyangie (the "angie" added as a nod to the Davy Graham instrumental), whose material matched Sally's Mary Hopkin-like vocals with Oldfield's impressive folk guitar. They were signed to Transatlantic Records and released one album, *Children Of The Sun*, which still sounds good, and the pair have continued to work together on each other's projects ever since.

In 1970, Oldfield joined Kevin Ayers' band, The Whole World, on bass, an instrument new to him but which he effectively treated like a lead guitar with four strings. It's hard to imagine the very young Oldfield fitting in as a member of a touring band, particularly one led by such an extreme artist as Ayers, but it was a time of learning for Oldfield (and presumably more fun than playing in the pit band for *Hair!*, which was also one of his early experiences). During this time he began to put together a demo tape for a piece of music he called "Opus One". The story of *Tubular Bells'* origins has been told many times around the campfires of prog – how Oldfield's demo was rejected by everyone, how it came to the attention of Richard Branson, and how its enormous worldwide success not only made Mike Oldfield ➢

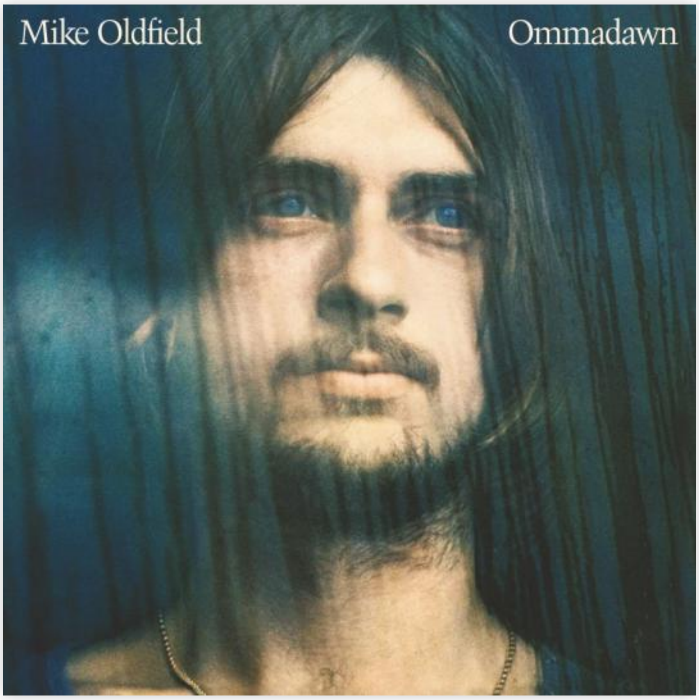

TUBULAR BELLS
Mike Oldfield

RETURN TO OMMADAWN
Mike Oldfield

PLATINUM
MIKE OLDFIELD

MIKE OLDFIELD INCANTATIONS

HERGEST RIDGE
Mike Oldfield


Mike Oldfield
Ommadawn

TUBULAR BELLS
VIRGIN, 1973
10/10

HERGEST RIDGE
VIRGIN, 1974
8/10

OMMADAWN
VIRGIN, 1975
7/10

INCANTATIONS
VIRGIN, 1978
7/10

PLATINUM
VIRGIN, 1979
7/10

RETURN TO OMMADAWN
VIRGIN EMI, 2017
8/10

Now with wings: Mike Oldfield on Hergest Ridge, near the Welsh/English border and his new house, 1974

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

MIKE OLDFIELD'S SINGLE
(THEME FROM TUBULAR BELLS)
Virgin
SIDE ONE
STEREO
℗ 1976 Virgin Records Ltd
Virgin Music (Publishers) Ltd
VS 167
VS 167-A
© 1976 Virgin Music (Publishers) Ltd
Time: 3.52
WILLIAM TELL OVERTURE
(G. A. Rossini, arr. Oldfield)
MIKE OLDFIELD
Produced by MIKE OLDFIELD

a household name, but also funded one of the best-known business empires in the world – and I've just told it again, so on we go.

Tubular Bells dominates Oldfield's career, much as *Tommy* does The Who's, and it's not hard to see why. Shiny, sparkling, tuneful and frankly beautiful, *Tubular Bells*' genius is that as an instrumental album it can be anything you want it to be: background music, emotional epiphany and even – thanks to *The Exorcist* – horror movie soundtrack. It remains an essential album, endlessly imitated – often by its creator – but always unique. There are many variants available, from the original demos to the orchestral version, but the best will always be the one that ends with Vivian Stanshall's drunk, Pythonesque commentary over "Sailor's Hornpipe", the album's finale ("*a human failing, some say a disease*").

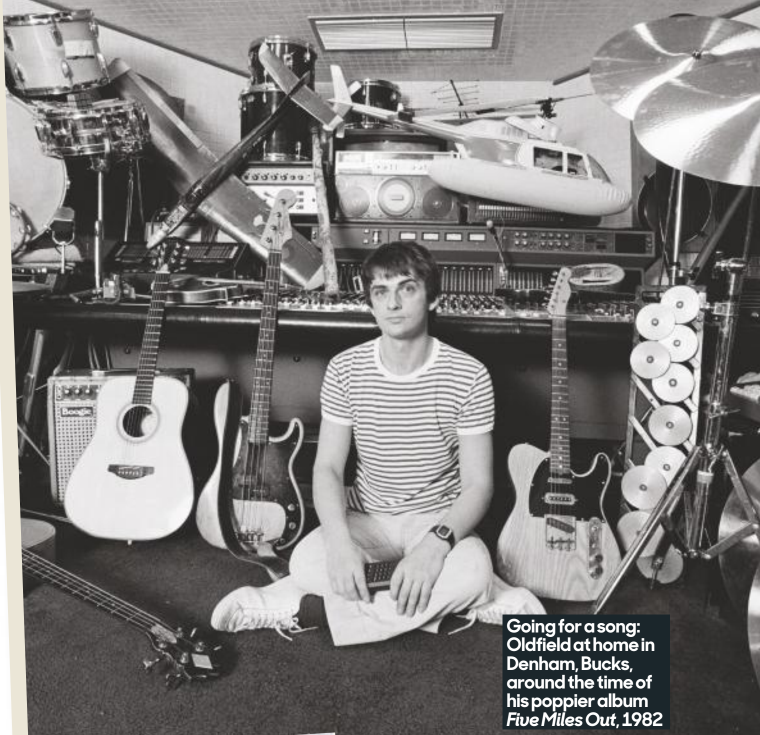
Its successor, *Hergest Ridge* (1974), suffered at the time, as all follow-ups to massive successes do, from essentially not being the same as its predecessor. And while it's not as striking as *Tubular Bells* – but then what is? – it's probably the record that reflects its creator's personality the most. Now a huge star, Oldfield refused to tour or publicise his records, and with *Hergest Ridge* – an album named after his new home near Offa's Dyke – made a record that perfectly illustrates the paradox of his music: an epic, multi-instrumental piece that sounds like the work of more than one man but is the product of a solitary, introspective individual. *Hergest Ridge* also encapsulates a version of the hippie dream in its sound and its artwork – Oldfield is pictured, long-haired and floppy-clothed, in a rural environment, to promote a record that is a masterpiece of contemporary recording technology.

Oldfield promoting anything was an unlikely concept at the time: he once described being interviewed as like being raped. Even now, the cheerful, funny and slightly bemused Mike Oldfield of the 21st century refers to world phenomena like Brexit and Trump as rejections of the notion of community – an idea that presumably appeals to Oldfield the loner. It's hard to imagine a greater contrast to the man whose career evolved in tandem to his, the showman and show-off Richard Branson, to whom Oldfield must have presented a frustrating challenge. Oldfield refused to perform *Tubular Bells* live and only agreed to playing the concert, legend has it, when Branson said he'd give him his Bentley, and he shunned publicity, retreating to his new home, The Beacon.

Hergest Ridge is dreamy and rural, and a little more understated than _Tubular Bells_

The Beacon and its environs were clearly a huge influence on *Hergest Ridge*, which is probably one of the last albums to reflect the 1960s ideal of getting back to the country. Musically, *Hergest Ridge* is woodier than its predecessor, dreamy and rural, and if at times it's a little more understated than *Tubular Bells*, that's only to be expected in a follow-up. It remains one of Mike Oldfield's best records. Obsessives please note that a rather wonderful orchestral version was also recorded with longtime Oldfield collaborator David Bedford; although not considered suitable for release, it can be found on YouTube. Oldfield wasn't happy with this version, but for some it brings the pastoral qualities of the piece to the fore.

Ommadawn (1975) came out the same year as *Physical Graffiti*, *A Night At The Opera* and *Born To Run* and it resembles none of those albums in any way. Its sleeve – later changed – shows Oldfield looking out of a rain-streaked window like Jesus stuck at home on a wet Monday. The album itself is probably the most New Age set that Oldfield has recorded, replacing the surprise and melodicism of its precursors with a consistent, dream-like layering of choral vocals and synthesisers. There are, this being Mike Oldfield, many moments of beauty and excellence – nobody plays the guitar in quite the same way as Oldfield – but the overall effect is of smoothness rather than shock. The effect is confirmed on side two, traditionally the home of Oldfield's more reflective pieces, which more closely resembles one of his collaborations with



Going for a song: Oldfield at home in Denham, Bucks, around the time of his poppier album *Five Miles Out*, 1982

David Bedford in its unresolved melodies and sense of restraint.

Ommadawn also contains the nearest thing to a statement of intent that Mike Oldfield has ever recorded in the form of "On Horseback", one of the very few songs he's written and sung himself. An ode to life on Hergest Ridge, drinking beer and eating cheese, "On Horseback" sees Oldfield identify with the solitary freedom of horse-riding; it's understated, funny and beautiful. There's a whole page to be written somewhere about Mike Oldfield's 1970s singles, from the Morris dance-y stomp of "Portsmouth" and "In Dulce Jubilo" to the what-were-they-thinking hilarity of "Don Alfonso" – "*I'm Don Alfonso,*" sings the eponymous bullfighter, "*I work for Oxo.*"

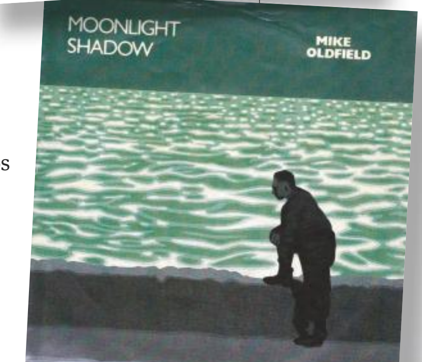
The next release for Oldfield was a compilation of the first three albums called *Boxed*. It's most notable now for its fourth disc, *Collaborations*, which brought together some of Mike Oldfield's singles, as well as his work with David Bedford. The shock for teenage ears expecting to hear more in the vein of *Tubular Bells* but getting the extraordinary orchestral space music of "First Excursion" was quite something – and in time you too will come to love Bedford and Oldfield's version of the old parlour ballad "Speak (Tho' You Only Say Farewell)", which has never been the same since. *Boxed* was a brilliant introduction to Mike Oldfield. And it's got the proper "Sailor's Hornpipe" on it ("*...but a disease that Sir Francis Dashwood knew and used well*").

1978's *Incantations* was a landmark record for Oldfield in many ways. As well as being his first double album, it was his first concept album, revolving around a loose theme of paganism, composed to a specific musical discipline – and it was also the last album by Oldfield to be played in its entirety on the John Peel Show (just at the height of punk – you could hear Peel wondering if he'd committed to a foolhardy plan as he announced side three). The world was changing, and a double album that encompassed the Roman goddess Diana, British druids and a series of suites based on a sequence of 12-key fifths was not quite as cool as once it might have been. None of which is to say that *Incantations* is a bad album; it is musically ambitious, well crafted and, as with most of Oldfield's work, has a fire in its belly and a sense of determination far removed from the sloppiness of overly ambitious concept albums.

Incantations is also remarkable for the fact that by the time it came out, Mike Oldfield had undergone a complete personal transformation, as evinced by the sleeve photo, where he stands next to a rock in Menorca, clean-shaven, short-haired and wearing a jacket (Oldfield, not the rock). In 1978, Oldfield undertook a course in Exegesis, a process described by some as "cult therapy" that involves the breaking down of the current self. Oldfield, who says he underwent a birth experience, was visibly transformed by the process, and became an outgoing, if not extroverted, person. The musical result of this transformation was immediately apparent.

In the 1970s, it was not uncommon for artists who had clung on to the trappings of the '60s for too long to undergo a sudden change of heart. Album groups became singles bands, long hair became short hair, lapels narrowed and artists who had railed against commercialism, synths and disco hits embraced all three. There may be more extreme examples of this switch-over than Mike Oldfield's new direction, but it's hard to think of a bigger leap than that from the four-sided conceptual album *Incantations* to its follow-up, the disco single "Guilty", which is a great record but hardly the sort of thing to accompany a mug of foaming ale and a chunk of Stinking Bishop.

BLUE PETER
MIKE OLDFIELD
Part of the proceeds of the sale of this record are being donated to the Blue Peter Cambodia Appeal



Oldfield's last album of the 1970s, *Platinum* (1979), was his first to include short pieces, several of which have disco drums. It's a great record, and is most notable for "Punkadiddle", whose semi-comic folk-punk stylings conceal a greater rage at the new music – much of it on Virgin – that Oldfield felt he'd accidentally funded. And, perhaps symbolically, it initially contained "Sally", a song that harked back to the silliness of early Oldfield ("*Sally, I'm just a gorilla*" indeed) but which Branson made him take off the album as it didn't fit in.

Mike Oldfield's future career would take him everywhere from movie soundtracks to entire albums of songs, along with several more nods to *Tubular Bells*, but he would revisit the musical style of his 1970s pomp only once more, with arguably his best work of the modern era, 2017's self-explanatory *Return To Ommadawn*. He remains an extraordinary, underrated talent (maybe if *Tubular Bells* had sold six copies and Virgin Records had ended up being best known for its excellent series of early Gong albums, things might have been different) who managed, unlike some of his peers, to overcome the insane success of his landmark debut and make music that, even now, defies categorisation. ●

Going green: Oldfield at Knebworth, June 21, 1980

PETE STILL/REDFERNS; GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS; FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS

"I'm going through a bad phase"

Defying the curse of *The Exorcist*, cash registers are ringing globally to the sound of *Tubular Bells*. To its dazed and distracted creator, **MIKE OLDFIELD**, however, it's "meaningless" and he wants the world to leave him alone with his hate mail, to work on a follow-up only an army of guitarists could perform. "I find life a strain," he tells ROY CARR

NME MARCH 23, 1974

Lennon deportation after club fight?
Musical Express
Now Stevie says: I quit

THE STORY so far: the scene is the 1973 Midem Festival in Cannes, the Music Biz's annual orgy of international wheeling and dealing, and Virgin Records boss man Richard Branson is doing the rounds with a master tape of Mike Oldfield's then just-recorded *Tubular Bells*. He's just played it to one US label representative and been told: "OK, slap some vocals on it and I'll give you $20,000."

Which is about the most positive reaction so far from a whole host of US labels displaying varying degrees of apathy to Branson's search for an American outlet. In fact the rest of them – including the mighty CBS – were so apathetic they didn't even put in a bid. "It'll never sell in America" seemed to be the consensus of opinion from all sides – the Midem saga in itself being a repeat of Oldfield's own difficulties in finding a British label before Branson's enterprising Virgin label put out the red carpet and opened its doors.

This week, *Tubular Bells* entered the American Top 5 and seems certain to achieve both gold and platinum status before the month's out. In Australia, the album has just taken the top slot on import sales.

Meanwhile, back in Britain, *Tubular Bells* has racked up sales far in excess of 200,000 since it first chimed into the bestseller lists on July 21, 1973. If the album continues to move at its current rate – and there are no indications that it's about to slow down – it could eventually eclipse the success of Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and even rival Simon & Garfunkel's *Bridge Over Troubled Water* as an all-time recording phenomenon.

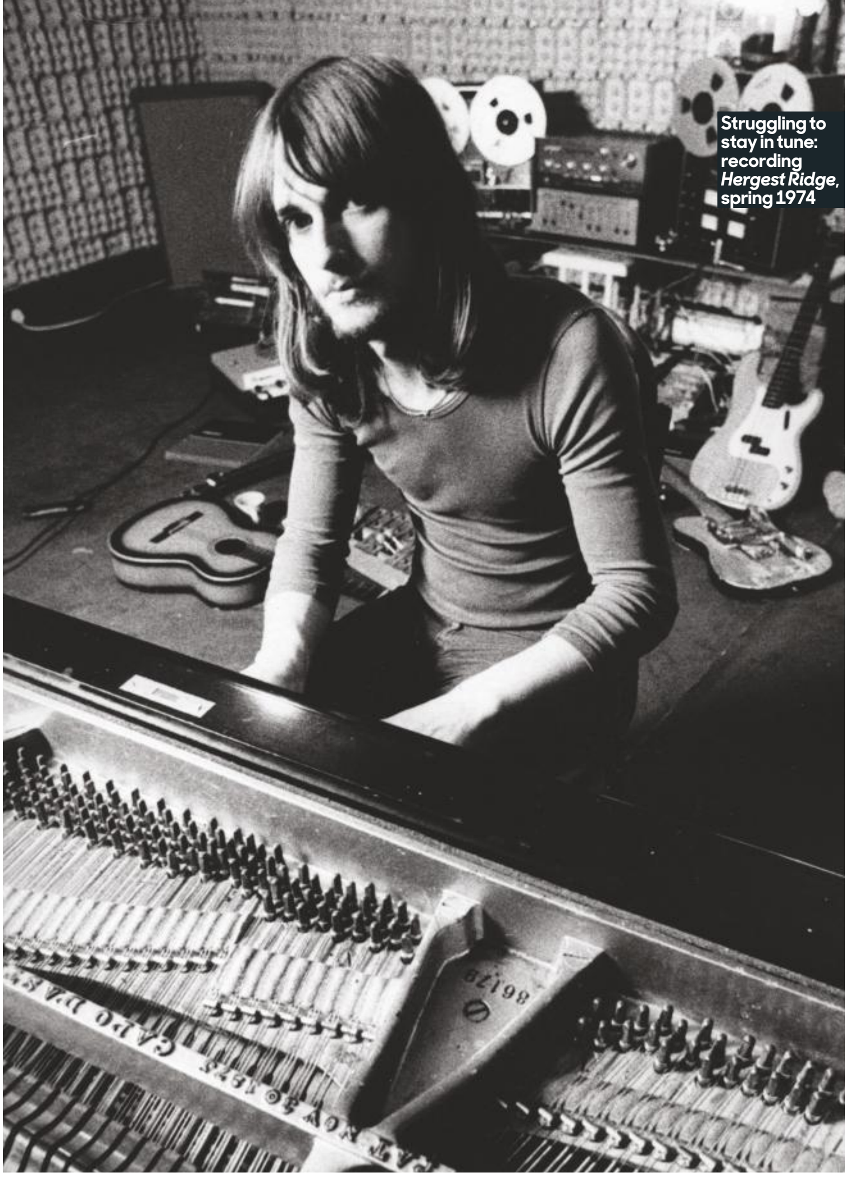
Not bad going for an introverted little bloke just turned 20, who hardly anyone wanted to know a year ago! The man in fact is as docile as Lewis Carroll's shagged-out little dormouse and about as animated as a day-old corpse. Experienced journalists have been known to stagger away from Oldfield ➢

PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

For whom the *Bells* toll: Mike Oldfield in 1974 interviews bemoaning the fact that they have insufficient copy to cover a G-string, and harbouring an overwhelming desire to return to their old vocation of writing readers' letters for *Forum*.

If the truth be known, I thought I'd blown it with my second question, through which I was attempting to create some kind of rapport with the reluctant Oldfield. We'd been labouring to establish interviewer-interviewee relations in the claustrophobic control room of The Manor recording studio somewhere in the Oxfordshire outback, and I'd asked him his feelings about *The Exorcist*.

What with *Tubular Bells* being used as the soundtrack, and all those blood-curdling tales (fact or publicist's fantasy) circulating about how people connected with the making of the movie are being beset with all kinds of personal traumas – accident, death and madness – I wondered if Oldfield was aware of the nasties currently being dealt out of Satan's pack.


Struggling to stay in tune: recording *Hergest Ridge*, spring 1974

A look of fear rapidly replaced the tranquillity of his placid blue eyes; his frail body trembled ever so slightly as he mumbled: "I wish you hadn't told me that. Anyway, that's it, you've finally convinced me; I'm definitely not going to see that film now.

"Even before you told me all this," he continued in a dry wavery voice, "I was much too frightened to see it. Judging from what I've read in the papers, coupled to what you've just said, that's it. I don't wanna know."

His cause for concern goes deeper than that of the thrill-seeking cinemagoer averse to performing a Technicolor yawn all over the lady peddling albatrosses on a stick. The fact is, the four-minute segment of *Tubular Bells* used for the soundtrack of the film was, states Oldfield, taken without his prior permission.

"The thing nobody realises," said Oldfield in a voice that starts in a strained whisper and invariably trails off mid-sentence into thin air, "is that I knew absolutely nothing at all about this. It's not that I really minded, but honestly, I wish you hadn't told me all those stories."

There was a long silence.

As it transpired, when the man spoke up again and the "interview" progressed, Oldfield didn't suddenly start carrying on in an alarming manner. Neither did heavy objects begin to levitate around the control room. To his credit, this man didn't start screaming obscenities, spew green bile in my face, make his head rotate a full 360 degrees or perform unmentionable acts on his person with the guitar that he was carefully re-stringing.

> "MOSTLY I LIKE CLASSICAL MUSIC, CHURCH AND CHORAL THINGS. NOT MUCH ROCK"
> **MIKE OLDFIELD**

In fact, he didn't do very much at all, and said even less.

"I'M telling you, you'll have to peg Mike down if you want to get anything out of him," was the word-to-the-wise advice whispered in my right ear by sound engineer Tom Newman when I first arrived at the rambling old Manor house.

At which point, Oldfield shuffled by grunting about "Scottish Tom" being on the other end of the phone. When one finally "pegs Mike down", he appears so anonymous that we could have quite easily printed a photograph of our own Steve Clarke on this page and no-one would have been the wiser, except the barmaid at the Marquee.

In his defence, however, I suppose I may have manifested myself at an inopportune moment for, after spending six weeks working on his new masterwork *Hergest Ridge*, Oldfield (sweat-stained armpits and all) is currently in a state of stagnation and acute frustration.

Apparently he's just scrapped one complete section of recorded music and was attempting to work up some enthusiasm to finish the task within the next two weeks. The previous day spent constructing and flying model gliders hadn't brought forth a much-needed burst of inspiration.

"I'm going through a bad phase at the moment, things aren't going quite right for me," husked the voice of mental constipation. "Nothing is turning out the way that I want it and, at the moment, I'm not quite sure how to go about rectifying it. Everything keeps going right out of tune, so I've had to re-string just about everything."

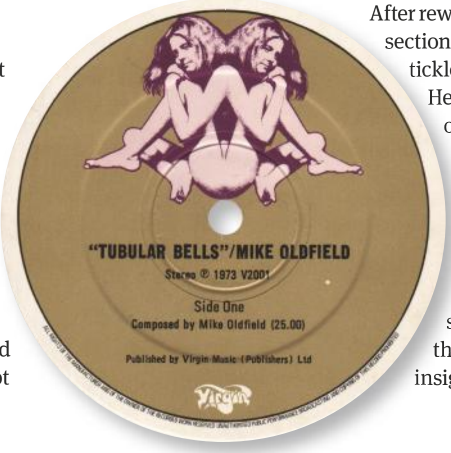
Suspect tuning, he admits, can in some instances enhance the sheets of sounds. But he goes on to reveal that this is by no means his only dilemma: "I also have a lot of trouble keeping time."

He slumps over the 24-track console, fiddles with a battery of knobs and switches and suddenly the room is filled with the celestial sounds of hallucinogenic voices, sky-diving guitars, macaroni mandolins and other heady noises that slurp'n'slide in and out of the giant playback speakers.

"This is the bit that's giving me a helluva lot of trouble."

We listen for a moment, before he bashes the stop mechanism.

"I've got a dreadful sense of timing… can't understand it. I think it's OK at the time, but when I come to play it back I find I've slowed down and speeded up in all the wrong places. I must have had my mind on other things."


"TUBULAR BELLS"/MIKE OLDFIELD
Stereo ℗ 1973 V2001
Side One
Composed by Mike Oldfield (25.00)
Published by Virgin Music (Publishers) Ltd
Virgin

After rewinding the tape to another section, 95 guitars in full array tickle our senses like 40,000 Headmen galloping across one's lobotomy on leapers. Very impressive.

"Christ, how could I ever possibly hope to recreate that live?", he ponders with a voice so dejected I felt like slashing my wrists, but at the same time giving some insight as to why *Tubular Bells*

has only been performed twice in public. Once in concert, once on television.

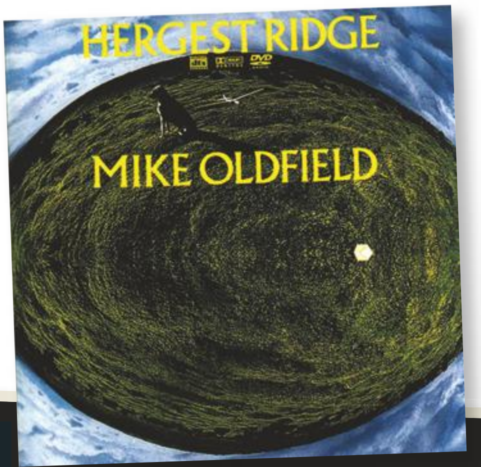
"I don't like doing gigs, and won't do any until such time as the whole concert thing is so incredibly rehearsed, well equipped and I've got the right people to play with. If eventually I am to do gigs, I want each and every one to be a satisfying thing to go out and do. And only then will I consider it. You see, I want people who are not only musically capable but also emotionally equipped to do it.

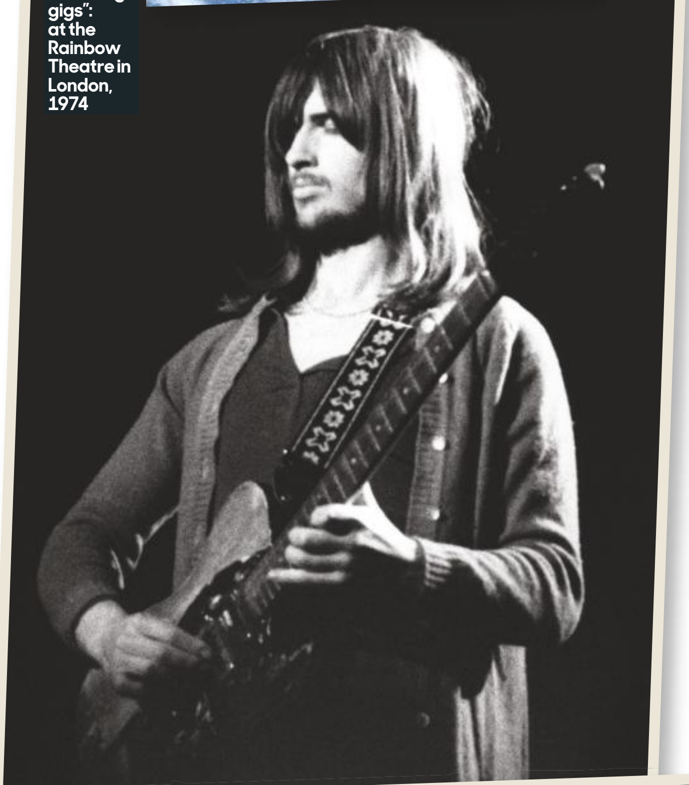
"To be truthful, I think I'd be much happier conducting and engineering it than actually participating. The engineering is twice as complicated as any of the parts. When we did that concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, we didn't use any amplifiers – all the guitars were fed straight into the mixing board, which a lot of people didn't realise. But even that had a lot of major technical hang-ups."

DESPITE this, Oldfield feels that eventually such problems can be surmounted. But as to whether the effort and expense will justify the result, all he can offer is a non-committal: "It might... but I dunno."

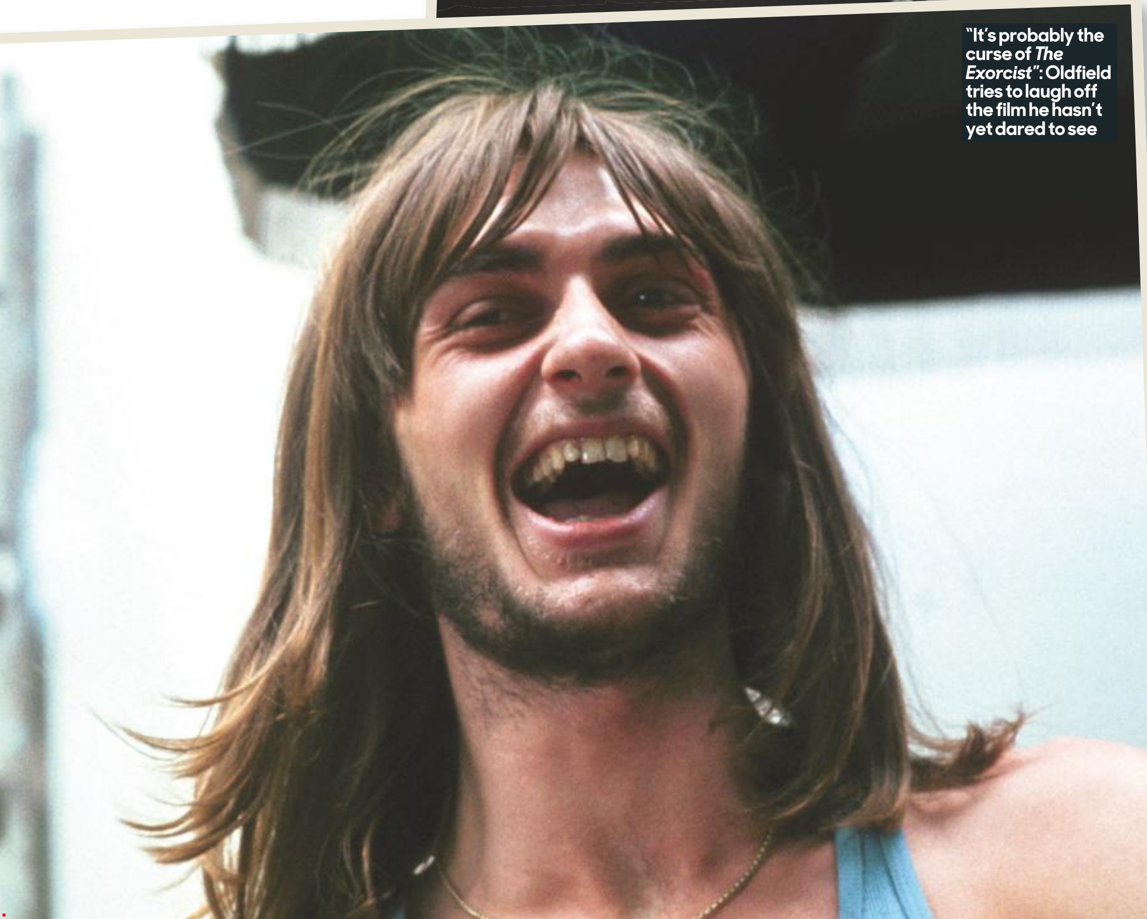
As yet he hasn't managed to overcome all the limitations of the recording studio. "The electronics stand in your way," he quietly drones, "they get between you and your final thing, so until such time that someone invents a control board that has inbuilt aesthetic judgement, that's the only way to do it."

It's a line of conversation that prompts him to dismiss any suggestion that by going it alone and playing most instruments he's in danger of becoming involved in a sophisticated exercise in recording technique.





"I don't like doing gigs": at the Rainbow Theatre in London, 1974



"It's probably the curse of *The Exorcist*": Oldfield tries to laugh off the film he hasn't yet dared to see

"All I'm doing is just making some music that I can listen to... well I think it's that! There's not a lot of music that I enjoy listening to. Mostly I like classical music, church and choral things – there's not too much rock that I can get off on.

"I'll tell you something," he continues without prompting. "I always thought that once I had made my own album, held the cover in my hands and read my name, I'd think it was wonderful. But, you know, it's not like that at all."

Jeez, Oldfield, I've got enough problems of my own without you crying on my shoulder as if I was some rock'n'roll Marjorie Proops.

"If I do get any sense of achievement from what I'm doing," he blubs, "it's when I'm mixing the thing. After that I'm so exhausted I couldn't really care less about things. I'm a bit too dazed to know if I'm really satisfied or dissatisfied with what I've done."

Indeed it appears Mike Oldfield gets his kicks in some very strange ways. He may have received unanimous praise from the world's press for *Tubular Bells*, but nevertheless he encountered great difficulty in relating to it.

As he tells it the only printed comment that made any real impression was a reader's letter in the musical press describing *Tubular Bells* as the biggest load of rubbish ever recorded.

"Believe it or not, that letter made me feel quite good inside. The fact that somebody hated it was great, but quite honestly, I can't understand why that one letter had such a wonderful effect on me. It gave me much more satisfaction than any of those positive reviews I read."

But then – as you many have already gathered – Mike Oldfield is an introverted personality beset with screaming contradictions, out of which here's one little gem:

"Basically I'm very insecure. In fact, I'm a bit worried about what's gonna become of me. I'll tell you, if I'd have started going on tour right away, I'm quite certain that something very nasty would have happened to me. I'm positive I wouldn't have come back in one piece."

Again this conversation is punctured with a strained pause as he attempts to detect the root cause of his fears. He fails, and dismisses it and the remainder of the interview thus:

"It's probably the curse of *The Exorcist*," he says with an unconvincing laugh. "After what you've told me about that film, I'm really very worried."

And with that he dashes off to take a call from the elusive Scottish Tom. Hey Mike, careful as you go, don't walk under any ladders. ●

MICK GOLD/GETTY IMAGES; PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

GENESIS

Some wild things floating about! Escaping public school, an English band frolic on the playing fields of their imagination. *By Mark Beaumont*

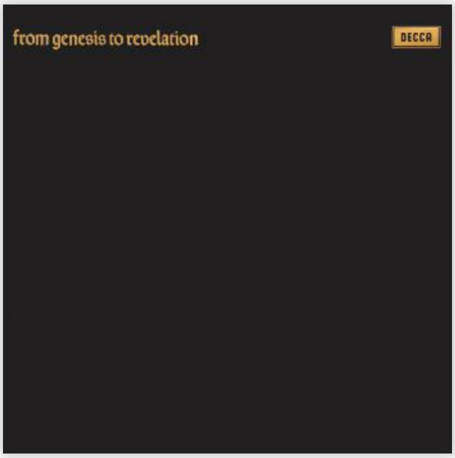
THE flower head, flute interludes and keyboard fanfares. The batwing headpiece and flowing red fox-gown. Twelve-string acoustic guitars duelling through a 23-minute song-cycle about an apocalyptic battle for the future of humanity. A seated band of virtuosos outshone by a singer dressed variously as a lascivious poltergeist pensioner, Britannia and a venereal disease. Music that was both rock and baroque – part gig, part recital – full of macabre fairy-tale imagery, religious and mythological references and characters worthy of Lewis Carroll's worst nightmares. Audiences – or rather, congregations – at Genesis shows during the early 1970s must have felt they were witnessing both the ascendance and epitome of progressive rock. Arguably, they were right.

They might also have noted that nothing could be more public school. But the Charterhouse school songwriting collective (unnamed and yet to play live together, they baulked at calling themselves a band) that conspired to get a demo tape to old boy Jonathan King during his January 1967 visit to his alma mater weren't your standard starch-collared toffs. Both Peter Gabriel and Tony Banks considered themselves outsiders amid the hallowed cloisters and brutal regimes of the Surrey boarding school. They bonded at the piano, where Banks' precocious classical skills play-fought with Gabriel's blues and soul thumping, as much Nina Simone as The Yardbirds. "I felt I could repress the middle-class English person with soul music," Gabriel told *NME*'s Paul Morley in 1980.

Their musical marriage to guitarist Anthony Phillips, drummer Chris Stewart and bassist Mike Rutherford was one of convenience – between them, they were the last remains of Charterhouse's disintegrating two-band rock scene. And the album that King produced for them in two days, having wangled a deal with Decca, is best consigned to history, not least because King still owns the rights.

1969's *From Genesis To Revelation* – "a bunch of kids in their holiday time", according to Rutherford – consisted of pastoral '60s pop nodding to US soul and Motown, Woodstock folk, Love and The Who, bearing little resemblance to the band they'd become, besides a rarefied airiness and a grand conceit. At King's suggestion, its 13 charmingly naive tracks were designed to trace the evolution of man from a Biblical perspective, pitting the Garden Of Eden of side one against the apocalypse of side two. Spirituality and religion, King deduced, were becoming hip in the age of the Maharishi. Before *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, King christened them Genesis.

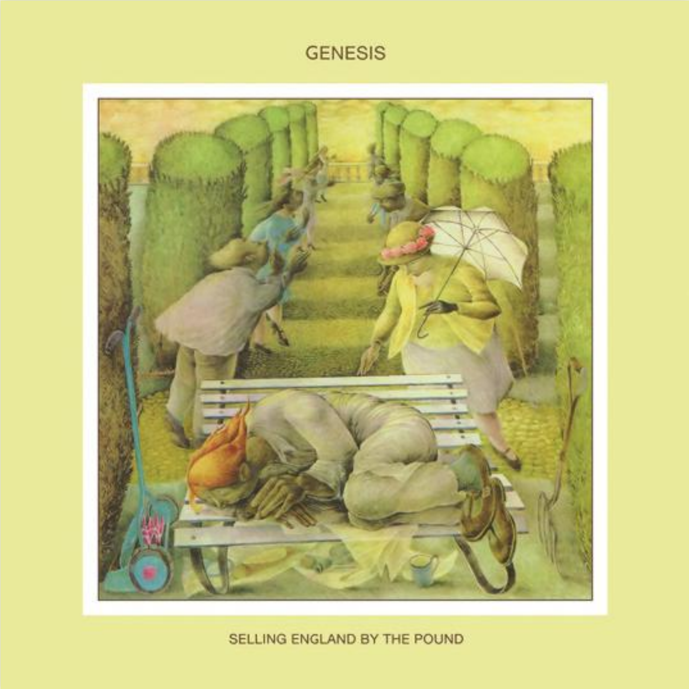
Two singles flopped, the album sold ➢


from genesis to revelation
DECCA

Genesis
Trespass

GENESIS
Nursery Cryme

GENESIS
Foxtrot


GENESIS
SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND

GENESIS
THE LAMB LIES DOWN ON BROADWAY

GENESIS
A Trick of the Tail

GENESIS
WIND & WUTHERING

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION
DECCA, 1969
5/10

TRESPASS
CHARISMA, 1970
6/10

NURSERY CRYME
CHARISMA, 1971
8/10

FOXTROT
CHARISMA, 1972
9/10

SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND
CHARISMA, 1973
6/10

THE LAMB LIES DOWN ON BROADWAY
CHARISMA, 1974
7/10

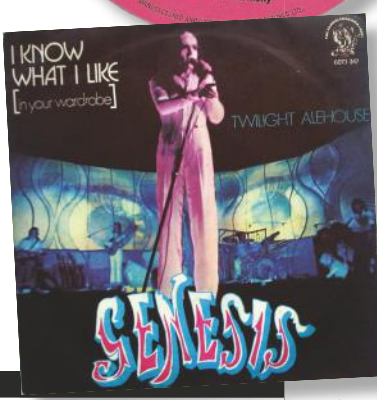
A TRICK OF THE TAIL
CHARISMA, 1976
8/10

WIND & WUTHERING
CHARISMA, 1976
8/10

Bats: Peter Gabriel in "Watcher Of The Skies" garb at Newcastle City Hall, October 1, 1972

(From left) soon-to-depart Peter Gabriel, Tony Banks, Phil Collins, Steve Hackett and Mike Rutherford, 1975

the famous
CHARISMA
label
Stratsong/
Cartin
℗ 1971
CB.152
(CB.152A)
THE KNIFE
(Genesis)
GENESIS
Producer: John Anthony



649 copies and Genesis cut ties with Decca and King. Shrewd move; with King often pruning Banks' more exuberant flourishes from the arrangements, it's unlikely he would've approved of the longer, elaborate compositions Genesis worked on during five monastic months at a friend's cottage in the autumn of '69, immersed in the archaic British imagery of *Monty Python* and the nonconformist dynamic of *In The Court Of The Crimson King*. It was here they found the angular aggression that propelled "The Knife", written to emulate "Rondo" by The Nice and ultimately nine minutes of brutal, disjointed blues foretelling Pink Floyd's "One Of These Days". This savage set finale, as well as Gabriel's impromptu storytelling whenever the gear broke down (which was often), set Genesis apart as they began to tour in earnest, and caught the attention of Charisma boss Tony Stratton-Smith during a Ronnie Scott's residency.

1970's *Trespass*, their first album for Charisma, was more successful as a blueprint than a breakthrough. Paul Whitehead's fantasy medieval cover art, coupled with Gabriel's Arcadian tales of warring wolf kings ("White Mountain") and moon-gazing poets ("Stagnation"), set a mythical tone which an entire genre would follow. The restless structures of these six pieces – by turns pastoral, grandiose, driving and stately – expanded on King Crimson's courtly premise and found a unique sound in the whimsy of Phillips and Rutherford's 12-string guitars winding around Banks' stentorian synths. Indulgent, phantasmagorical and occasionally overwhelming, *Trespass* looked and sounded like a first draft of '70s prog rock.

Like an upturned jigsaw, all of the pieces of Genesis were present on *Trespass*, but in the wrong order. It took a new Mellotron, a change of personnel – Phil Collins the last of a rotating cast of drummers and Steve Hackett replacing a tour-broken Phillips to complete the classic lineup – and a decamp to Stratton-Smith's country pile Luxford House to cement their aesthetic. Collins, an ex-child actor with appearances in *Chitty-Chitty Bang Bang* and the West End production of *Oliver* in his resumé, came with a certain vaudevillian impishness, and the surroundings reminded Gabriel of his grandparents' dark Victorian home. Swiftly, Genesis lay fresh roots in the Edwardian macabre – the sinister nursery rhyme, the haunted doll's house, the twisted taxidermy.

Key to this time-warp was "The Musical Box", the ominous story of Cynthia Jane De Blaise-William decapitating young Henry Hamilton-Smythe with a croquet mallet, only for him to emerge from a haunted musical box, age rapidly and try to seduce her. A masterpiece of gathering drama and explosive resolution, it paired with the semi-metal "The Return Of The Giant Hogweed", in which a toxic Victorian plant army took on the human race in a fight to the death between man and herb, to give 1971's *Nursery Cryme* the feel of a record dragged through the looking glass, darkly.

Genesis lay fresh roots in the Edwardian macabre – the sinister nursery rhyme, the haunted doll's house...

Further Genesis trademarks cohered here too. "Harold The Barrel" was their first multi-character play-within-a-song, a farcical pre-Madness romp about a desperate Bognor restaurant owner shunning all attempts to talk him down from a ledge. "Seven Stones" and the exquisite "For Absent Friends" – Hackett and Collins' first major contribution – were delicate pencil sketches of age, wisdom and grief. *Nursery Cryme* brought a fresh wit, character and musical definition to Genesis, lifting the dense fog of *Trespass* and launching what Charterhouse associate Richard Macphail would call "the golden era".

Like the two previous albums, *Nursery Cryme* bombed in the UK, but its success on the Continent saw Genesis playing to crowds of 20,000 in Italian arenas one night and to 40 in British clubs the next. Against this backdrop Gabriel's theatrical ambitions flourished. His stories became character set-pieces; he'd end "The Musical Box" licking lasciviously from behind an old man's mask, or shave the front of his head for an eccentric Egyptian effect. Whereas Bowie would inhabit singular creations like Ziggy, Gabriel – whose career was almost symbiotic with Bowie's throughout the '70s – set out to inhabit his entire cast, and it proved the making of the band. One September night in Dublin in 1972, inspired by Paul Whitehead's artwork for their forthcoming third album, Gabriel appeared wearing his wife's Ossie Clark red dress with a fox's head; the following week, Genesis would grace the cover of the *Melody Maker*.

The outfit was the iconic central image for *Foxtrot*, the peak of Gabriel-era Genesis. Side-long apocalyptic song suites or no, here there was no slack. Replacing musty fantasy with sci-fi gleam, propulsive opener "Watcher Of The Skies" almost fell over its own stampeding bass riff and churchy Mellotron to tell the story of an alien arriving on Earth to find humankind departed. "Get 'Em Out By Friday" was Genesis's most successful song-play, a satire on money-grubbing '70s landlords who, come 2012, enforce a humanoid height restriction of four feet in order to squeeze more people into tower blocks – an acerbic precursor to the next album's contemporary social themes.

Foxtrot's centrepiece, meanwhile, would come to define the band's first incarnation, if not prog rock as a genre, and with good reason. Few 23-minute musical montages are as expertly paced, deftly dynamic and consistently melodic as "Supper's Ready"; particularly ones merging *The Pilgrim's Progress* with *The Book Of Revelations* that open on an ominous vision of hooded figures and end with an almighty cosmic battle between good and evil, via the Narcissus myth and a Pythonesque carnival detour to "Willow Farm". Owning side two of *Foxtrot*, "Supper's Ready" pulled on its famous flower headpiece and bellowed, "Follow that!"

1973's high-minded social statement *Selling England By The Pound* couldn't.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES, JORGEN ANGEL/REDFERNS

New World, new face: Bill Bruford (left) lends percussive assistance to Phil Collins during a US tour, Central Park, NYC, April 1976

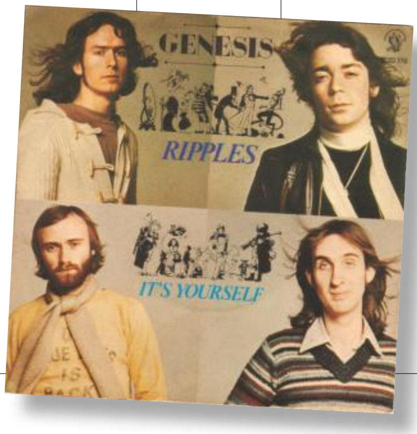
MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Despite boasting graceful Old Albion metaphors for the commercialisation of '70s Britain on "Dancing With The Moonlit Knight" and their first actual hit in folk-funk servant's anthem "I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)", there was an indulgence, lack of focus and clichéd courtliness to the record that Genesis had seemed to transcend on *Foxtrot*. Any glory gleaned from reworking TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* as a sweet folk ditty on "Cinema Show", or from "Firth Of Fifth", where Banks' spectacular keyboard fanfares mated wonderfully with Hackett's Floyd riffs, was soon tarnished by "The Battle Of Epping Forest", a cartoonish array of East End gangsters clashing over 11 messy minutes, all voiced by Gabriel like a *Goon Show* with knuckledusters.

Nonetheless, *Selling England*... hit No 3 in the UK and catapulted Genesis into arenas, where Gabriel's theatrics – "Watcher..." batwings, Britannia costume, bouts of flight – upstaged the music and alienated the band. The stage was set for a magnificent, band-splitting folly. At Headley Grange, a former Hampshire poorhouse still haunted by Led Zeppelin's magic, they conceived a double concept album which, to refresh and contemporise the band, transposed their fantastical visions to New York City, and then went wildly off-script.

Considering even Gabriel claims to be unsure of the plot of 1974's *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* (and he wrote it), we'll not try to unpick it here. Suffice to say, a teenage street punk named Rael goes in search of his brother John in a surrealist New York netherworld, gets his heart shaved, meets Death, shags a snake-woman, gets castrated, realises he's been searching for himself all along and dies, or doesn't. Inspired by Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast Of Champions* and Jodorowsky's 1970 acid western *El Topo*, interwoven with Gabriel's psycho-sexual dream imagery and increased alienation from the band, it was perhaps best summed up by Mark Radcliffe in 1998: "It may be some kind of transcendental awakening, it might be a nightmare vision of the future, it may be a foetus on a fast-track to birth or it may be a load of old toss."

One can only imagine the bewilderment of audiences watching *The Lamb*... performed in full before the album was even released, with a three-screen projection show that, according to Collins, synchronised correctly with the music at one in every hundred shows and, for "Colony Of The Slippermen", involved Gabriel emerging from an inflatable penis dressed as an STD. Up to "Lilywhite Lilith" they likely basked in Genesis's transformation into a modernist marriage of The Who and Sparks, wowing at the band's most direct melodic punches yet: "In The Cage"'s pulsing rock, the Beatles-aping "Counting Out Time" and the gossamer, baroque "Carpet Crawlers". For the weirder, patchier second half, they probably shifted in their seats praying for anything as zippy as "Supper's Ready".



It would take some years for the import of *The Lamb*... to hit home; its kinship to *Quadrophenia* rather than ...*Topographic Oceans*, its uprooting of progressive rock from misty mythology and replanting in the musical future, its never-to-be-spoken influence on new wave. It was these elements that Gabriel took with him when he walked right out of Genesis's machinery to spend more time with his growing family at the end of the tour, and used to kick-start one of the most boundless solo careers in rock history.

Gabriel's 1975 departure benefitted both parties. Collins got the frontman job thanks to his natural vocal affinity to Gabriel's rich warble, but his sharper tone and nose for a catchy twist helped Genesis regenerate with two of their most finely sketched and accessible albums of the '70s, arguably trumping much of Gabriel's reign. *A Trick Of The Tail* (1976) took on a Dickensian aesthetic, reassuring the faithful with hypnotic folk pop billows like "Entangled" and 'Ripples...", a signpost to their soft rock '80s output called "Squonk" and the endearing title track, a cloven-hoofed "Penny Lane" about a horned beast who flees his "*city of gold*" for the kingdom of men, only to find we're largely gits.

The post-Gabriel chart lull never arrived – ...*Tail* became Genesis's first US Top 40 hit. Assured, the four-piece rushed out *Wind & Wuthering* that December, a somewhat daintier offering channelling the Brontë sisters and, song about *Tom & Jerry* notwithstanding, the band's late-'70s high-point. Wintry messiah epic "One For The Vine" climaxed in a flurry of interweaving keyboard melodies that was one of Banks' finest achievements, and the prog meandering of side two, predicting *The Wall*, culminated in the stirring "Afterglow", proof that ELO's symphonic balladry hadn't gone unnoticed by them.

Hackett's departure in 1977 stripped Genesis of another layer of florid and their imperceptible shift towards pop-rock song-writing was laid bare when "Follow You Follow Me" limboed onto the end of ...*And Then There Were Three*... in 1978. 1980's seminal *Duke* would be the last Genesis album to entertain a prog rock structure, but even here they broke up a proposed 30-minute regal pop suite in order to bookend Collins' majestic divorce ballads. As the most imaginative and form-challenging act of the genre, they'd guided prog rock from genesis to numerous revelations. Now it was time to write their stadium pop testament. ●

Flower power: Peter Gabriel on stage with Genesis in 1973

"I'm excited by the visual aspect"

The failed pro golfer. The childhood Artful Dodger. The one-man special-effects department. The one with the fox-head phobia – and the one who "poodles about" in "silly costumes". Meet GENESIS: "People will either love or hate us on the tour," says Peter Gabriel. "There's no indifference."

MELODY MAKER MARCH 3, 1973

Melody Maker
PUPPY LUST RETURNS!
Alice shock
Beefheart tour dates

GENESIS are in that exciting time when life seems rosy and prospects are good. After many years of toil, uncertainty and blind faith, their ambitions are being realised and their talent recognised. America beckons, the next album will probably be a smash and concerts are a sell-out, wherever Peter Gabriel unfurls his wings.

Genesis have always been determined to play their own music without compromise, right from the days when they played to five people in the room upstairs at Ronnie Scott's Club. And they will concede no compromises now they have joined their brother groups amid the hullabaloo of acclaim and exposure.

In many ways, Genesis are of the old-fashioned breed of group, who originally laid the foundations of the whole modern group structure. Most of them went to school together. Few have played with any other band. When they started out they were rough and unready and held quaint ideas about writing and playing that no one would touch. While other groups went on to fame and fortune, they teetered on the verge of breaking up, quarrelled, but slogged on and won an essential grass-roots following. ➢

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

The music the band feature has been compared to Yes, and other bands that specialise in arrangements. In fact, one of their earliest influences was The Nice.

Genesis do not, however, place much emphasis on solo work or extended improvisation, and the use of Mellotron and Steve Hackett's "non-guitar" guitar sounds don't lead to any direct comparison with anything else that is happening.

Genesis are eccentric and very English, and blues hardly enters their work; even the term "rock" is irrelevant most of the time. Nevertheless it is gripping, often startling, with a thorough understanding of the use of dynamics, light and shade. It is a textural montage in which classical music, jazz and rock can all be seen to have had an effect.

MIKE RUTHERFORD

A CHARTERHOUSE school veteran, bass guitarist Mike Rutherford treats a mean pair of Mr Bassman pedals, which supply the mysterious bass pulse when he is strumming at an acoustic guitar with Steve. He also plays regular bass guitar and two 12-string guitars, all of which help in the vital shading and pastel tones the band employ. He tends to ramble in a pleasantly coherent fashion, often a trait among public school chaps, and blithely admits if it wasn't for this rock'n'roll business, he would probably have gone into the Foreign Office.

"We seem to be on the up at the moment," he observed lightly. "We do feel there is a frightful lack of material. We write so slowly," Mike shook his head in sorrow.

He laughed and explained that "to me at any rate" had been his favourite expression ever since he heard Peter Sellers use it, as Nancy Lisbon interviewing Twit Conway, on *Songs For Swingin' Sellers*.

A man who could conceivably have devoted himself to hunting tigers in India explained how he became a vital force in Genesis. "I started off writing with Anthony Phillips, our old guitarist. Just songs, y'know. I've always had a thing about songs.

"When we left school, Peter was getting a band together and I joined on bass and rhythm guitar. I love strumming. Never really wanted to be a dynamic lead guitarist. We used to write pop songs, and I thought they were rather nice.

"The first thing we wrote as a band was a 45-minute piece that we didn't record, but we still use bits to this very day. When we started the band we knew nothing about the business or what bands did, which was good, really. We were incredibly green, but luckily we didn't sign anything.

"We didn't know how to set up the equipment for a gig and we used to travel around with a picnic basket, containing hard-boiled eggs, pots of tea and scones, that we set up in the dressing rooms. The other bands were frankly amazed. But we were very fond of tea.

"We had no conception of what would happen, and I'm really glad we did it. I had led such a soft life up and until then, and being in a group doesn't do you any harm at all. I was studying English at Edinburgh University, but I couldn't go back again."

"WE USED TO TRAVEL WITH A PICNIC BASKET, WITH HARD-BOILED EGGS, POTS OF TEA AND SCONES"
MIKE RUTHERFORD

How did Mike intend to use his studies at university? "Actually, I wanted to be a pro golfer. I take clubs with me wherever we go. But we're all unfit. I just play when I can."

To what extent had Mike studied musical theory and the art of bass guitar?

"I sort of picked it up. I'm starting to learn to read music now. I suppose our present musical form started to develop about three years ago. We used to change much quicker than we do now. But, of course, there were fewer people coming to see us.

"I wish we could have had Phil then. His arrival gave us an awful lot more confidence. There has always been a lot of friction in the band, but it's not too bad, really. When Phil joined and saw us all quarrelling, I think he thought we were splitting up! We argue a lot less now and there is more give and take."

PHIL COLLINS

PHIL Collins, the drummer, is one of that breed of drummers with a fine technique who devotes it solely to the band's music. He rarely if ever solos, but the intelligent and dramatic shading that he employs is exciting in itself.

He has played drums since the age of five, and at one time pursued an acting career, which he now prefers not to talk about, but like Steve Marriott, included a stint in *Oliver!* as the Artful Dodger, and a whole string of radio and TV appearances. "The only band I was in of any consequence before Genesis was Flaming Youth," he says. "I thought they were a good band and we were quite influenced by Yes. We would do a 15-minute version of 'Norwegian Wood'. We did the album *Ark 2*, but at all gigs we'd play half somebody else's material and didn't please anybody.

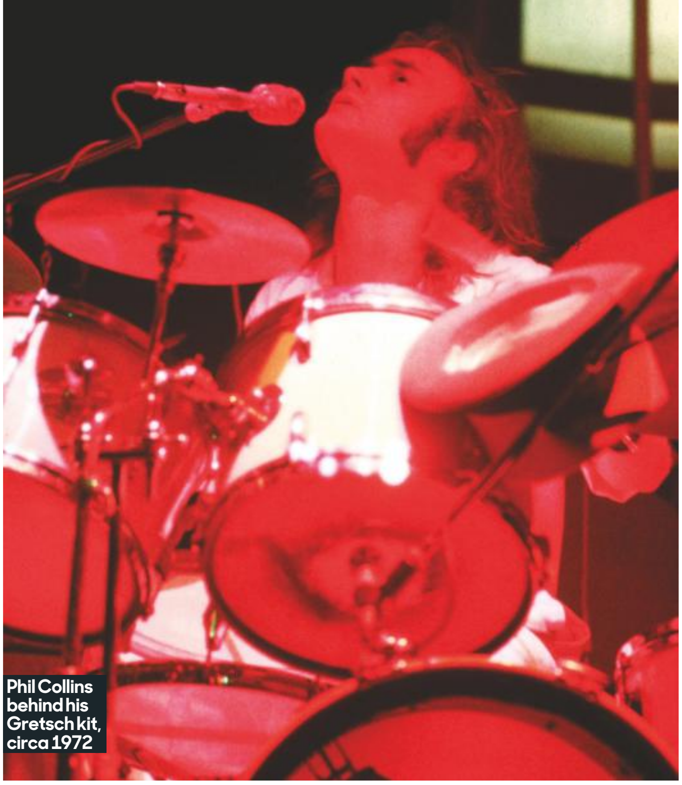
The band in 1973: (l-r) Banks, Collins, Rutherford, Hackett and Gabriel

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY

"My own playing was quite influenced by Bill Bruford and John Bonham. But when I started out, I liked Joe Brown And The Bruvvers. I'm not really a jazz freak, y'know, although big bands always appealed to me. I liked the way the drummer accented or filled in. It appealed to me the way you didn't have to play a set rhythm between the accents. I used to watch all the big band drummers, and thought Harold Jones with Count Basie was excellent.

"I'd like Genesis to get a bit looser, while keeping the arranged things. When you're on tour, you begin to want to change things. I want to get more into different time signatures. Some of my best playing is on the 9/8 things on 'Supper's Ready'. It's interesting to play.

"I was taught by [*the late drum tutor*] Frank King. I realised that if I wanted to be a pro drummer when I was 40, I'd have to learn to read. I got my first drums when I was five, and my father used to hide them in the cellar. Later on, I sold my train set to buy some drums. When I quit acting, my parents were a bit upset, but I'd always seen myself as a drummer.


Phil Collins behind his Gretsch kit, circa 1972

"I was a drum fan: I liked everyone, Ringo, Keith Moon, there were such a lot of good drummers, Buddy Rich, of course, and guys you don't hear so much about, Ian Wallace, and John Halsey with Patto. But I don't like rock drumming as such. I like to tune my drums properly and there should definitely be a musical approach to playing. I think my playing has improved a lot, and two recent influences have been Billy Cobham and Bernard Purdie.

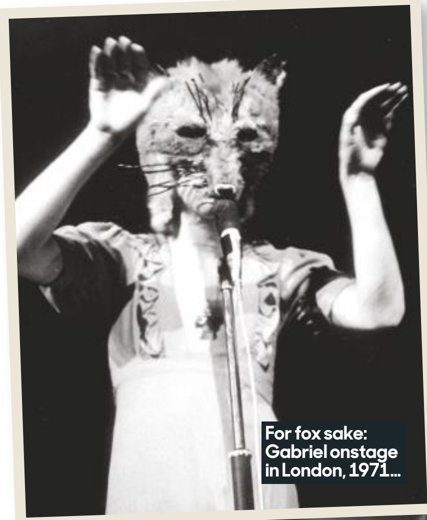
"I've done some sessions to get the frustration out of me, and I even did a season at a holiday camp, wearing a bow tie and playing waltzes. That can be fun, too! If I'm not playing, I'm listening and learning. All will be revealed on the next LP.

"I think of myself as a drummer rather than Genesis' drummer. I'd like to get back into two bass drums sometimes. I heard a tape recently made when I was 15 and there are some things on there I couldn't do now. I think Mike and I work together really well, and with Tony. I think the band will loosen up. We actually had a jam session at the Rainbow rehearsal, and we never normally do that kind of thing. I think some sparks are going to fly!"

PETER GABRIEL

THERE are many facets to Peter Gabriel's role in Genesis. He is a remarkable singer, with a variety of tonal effects at his command, from an unexpected soul shriek to clipped, precise phrasing – agonising howls to grotesque rolling accents delivered with theatrical venom. Sometimes he sounds like Anthony Newley or Ron Moody. He teeters from angelic pose to supernatural devilry, as he beats time on a solitary bass drum, the remnants of some long forgotten kit. He plays lyrical, in-tune flute, and can also be seen practising the oboe.

Onstage he will remain motionless for minutes on end, or disappear, only to burst forth in some stunning costume, perhaps the famous a head of a fox. But as Peter realises, such tactics can only work when they are unexpected, when they are timed to emphasise or illustrate some twist in the lyrics. There is a great deal of humour in Peter's approach, but there is also a power that cannot be dismissed. There is an opaqueness to his character. An indefinable mist comes down on certain subjects. He seems open enough in discussion, but more lurks beneath the surface. Asked if he believes in the characters he takes on during a stage performance, his simple reply is "Yes."


For fox sake: Gabriel onstage in London, 1971...

Some years ago there was a brief infatuation among groups for magic, by Black Widow, Sabbath and others. Graham Bond has frequently talked about the subject. But in Peter's performance there seems to be more than just an attempt at theatre. The various efforts he makes to take an audience with him seem to have an accumulative effect that works. The wildness of the audience reaction at the Rainbow, for example, seems to confirm that the music by itself is not conducive to dancing in the aisle, in the manner of a soul or rock band. Gabriel does seem possessed in some way, when he performs, and his shy stutter offstage in no way invalidates this impression.

Our conversation began in fairly normal fashion, but as his piercing eyes and crooked smile, beneath a partially shaven head, bore into me, I felt in some way I had made contact with the unknown.

"If our present success continues, we'll be in the situation where we can realise most of our ambitions in music and creative presentation. I hope what we do will be completely new. We need two months in one building to write and experiment. At the moment we are still in the first stage of audio-visual, in the way that the first stereo engineers experimented with trains passing from one speaker to another. After a while people became bored with that, and after the train noises, gained a great understanding of the medium they were using.

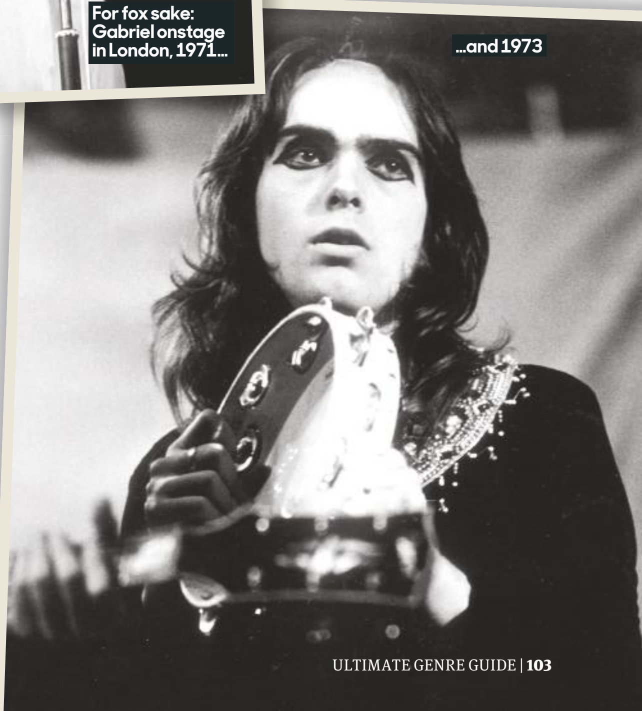
"I wouldn't say we have discovered anything yet – we are still talking about it in wishy-washy terms. But after the last couple of years of development, we can now see the possibilities. I hope we can clear ourselves of debt from record royalties, and plough back any profit into realising more expansionist ideas.

"I don't like the word 'show'. It's not sort of Hollywood dancing girls. It's difficult to put into words the visual concept. It's a visual and musical concept expressed at the same time. My things are my own, and the more we present ourselves as a co-operative band, the happier I'll be. I don't want to project myself above the band. I just poodle about and put on silly costumes.

"I do have things I'm interested in outside of the band. There is a songwriter called Martin Hall and there is a possibility of my doing an LP with him. As it is – the band comes first."

Will success change Genesis?

"Well, it will have to improve on past performance if we are going to keep together. We were losing money fast. We believed in what we were doing and that's all. Yes, it does place certain pressures. A trap I hope we won't fall into is that after an artist has received a certain amount of success, he is given the conviction that even his most insignificant fart is a ➢


...and 1973

IAN DICKSON/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES work of art. Mumble, mumble, second verse follows the first.

"We go onstage and do a bad gig and everybody says it's the most brilliant thing they have ever seen in their life. The time comes when you believe they are right. We should be cautious about that. We are learning all the time, and on the whole in this business, it is the easiest field in which to be highly successful and mediocre at the same time. One should be constantly maintaining higher aims."

Is there a danger of Genesis being trapped into a formula?

"I'd like to change the act after every gig. One gig should be totally theatrical, and the next one dressed in denim. I would feel happier if you come to a Genesis gig and not know what you're going to see. But some people have already complained because we dropped the fox's head. I'd like to get a regular change in the music as well. Eh? Oh, I've got the fox's head at the moment. We're thinking of giving it as a prize in the Giant Hogweed Youth Movement competition. I must give a plug to the mask maker – Guy Chapman, who made the pinballs for the *Tommy* opera. Erika Issitt does the costumes.

"I want to create a fantasy situation. The flower head should be hamming it up. It's consciously supposed to be unreal. I don't specifically want to frighten. Let's say I would prefer to be Fellini. In fact, the flower walk was probably more influenced by Shirley Temple, which is better than ripping off Eric Clapton."

Next LP? "We've got our little bits ready. April we'll start, but in the meantime we're going to America. I'd like a more acoustic feel than we did on *Foxtrot*. We want to extend the degree of contrast in the music. I want to spend the next 50 years of my life learning."

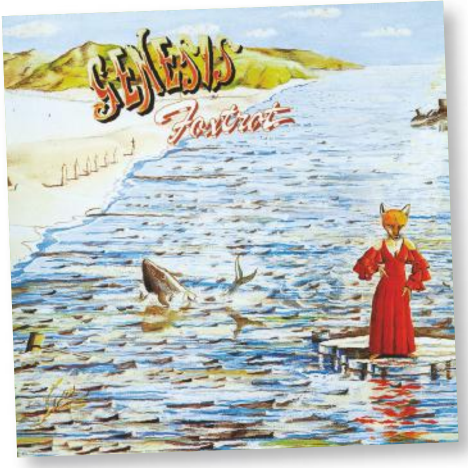
TONY BANKS

TONY Banks is one of the main men when it comes to unravelling who contributes most to the Genesis sound. His mournful Mellotron cries and sustained chords are vital in maintaining the mood and aura of a performance, and by the nature of his instrument he takes the lead in structuring the arrangements.

Ex-Charterhouse and Sussex University, his musical training included nearly 10 years' classical piano studies. He first played in The Garden Wall, a school group with Peter and Anthony Phillips, original Genesis guitarist. "My particular role in the band? Well, I'm not an improviser in a group situation. I can improvise and will play away for hours on my own at the piano. But when I'm restricted to a riff or chord sequence, I find it difficult to improvise. I prefer to work out my playing in advance. And I don't have any desire to improvise, as my sole concern is the composition and playing of the arrangement.

"We spend weeks getting a song together. We'd like to speed up the process, because you can soon get bored playing the same thing each night. But I've found I'm enjoying playing more than a year ago.

"There are two main ways we get material together. One of us might write a complete offering and the group arranges it. This doesn't often happen! Otherwise we all work together on a 10-second idea and then develop it. Each member takes a part in the writing. You see, we originally got together as writers, and this is the strength of the band. In fact, each member writes enough to fill an LP. When I write a lyric, I try to think of Peter, who has to sing them. Peter's own lyrics tend to be more abstract and I tend to have reservations about obscurity. I think he wrote 'Supper's Ready' too hurriedly.



"I started playing classical music at school. When I was about 13 I went off classical piano and didn't want to play it any more. I would pick out Beatles tunes instead. But at 16 it was back to the classics again. The first group I ever saw was The Nice, and I didn't think anybody played music like that. It was pretty early days for them at the Marquee and it was pretty simple stuff I suppose. But I was quite impressed by the possibilities of a visual act. They were never as good after that first time, and they weren't half the band after the guitarist left. It was all organ and I thought the guitar was essential."

"I WAS IRRITATED BY THE FOX'S HEAD THAT PETER USED, AND DIDN'T THINK IT WAS JUSTIFIABLE"
TONY BANKS

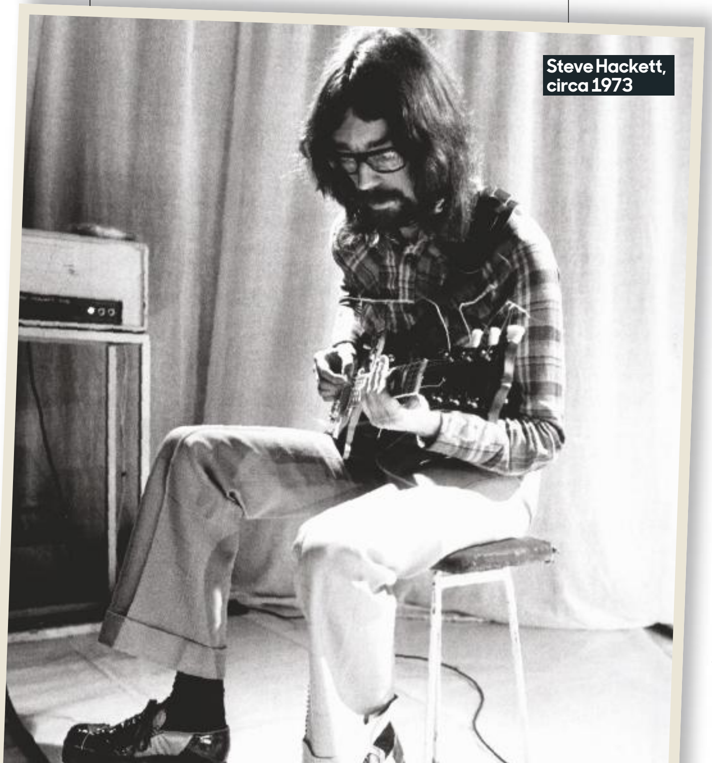
"I like Yes quite a lot, and I liked *The Yes Album*, but I wasn't impressed by *Fragile* and I haven't heard *Close To The Edge*. I don't feel influenced by them at all. I suppose when we did *Nursery Cryme* there was a superficial likeness, but if you listen to the LPs for any length of time, the similarities will disappear. We listen to a lot of music. There is no jazz influence on what I play, but Phil can make it sound like jazz and I like that.

"We've all been evolving since we were at school, and Peter, Mike and myself never played with anybody else. It's quite satisfactory, really, because I never played organ before, and learned through Genesis. Mike hadn't played bass before and was a guitarist.

"Everything you do changes you. I enjoy a lot of aspects of being in a group. I don't enjoy travelling. I stayed a year at university and then when Genesis started, I took one year's leave of absence to see how it would go. I've never been back."

Tony admits he doesn't always entirely enjoy the visual aspect of Genesis and says there has been friction between him and Peter Gabriel in the past. "I don't have much to do with the presentation and didn't always like it. But Peter is a natural for that and I'm more happy with it now.

"We've tried never to compromise and we're not going to now. I enjoy taking the music seriously and we want more people to listen to us. I was irritated by the fox's head that Peter used, and didn't think it was justifiable. I always regretted it. But now I'm getting more excited about the visual aspect. And I've known Peter too long to be frightened by him!"


Steve Hackett, circa 1973

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

STEVE HACKETT

SCREAMING effects and whispering melody lines, unison work with the organ, brass, and gentle acoustic guitar behind the vocals are all Steve Hackett's forte.

One of the most recent members of the band, which worked as a four-piece after their original guitarist left, Steve has a dry humour, and enjoys telling the saga of his running advertisements in the *Melody Maker*'s famed 'Musicians Wanted' columns.

Educated at Sloane Grammar school in Kensington, Steve enjoys composers Erik Satie, Albinoni, Scarlatti and Bach, as well as King Crimson. He is one of the quietest members of the band and onstage prefers to remain static, rather than attempt uneasy rock-style leaping.

"Onstage I do tend not to use the guitar as a guitar, but rather as a voice in the oneness of sound. A lot of the time people say, 'Where's the guitar? I can't hear it.' It's more of a special-effects department."

Does Steve covet the freedom to blow more?

"On the next LP I'd like to use the guitar as a guitar. The music does tend to be over-arranged. On gigs 90 per cent of it is arranged. The reason I want to sit down, by the way, is because of the battery of

Gabriel and co deliver "relevant entertainment", Allen Theater, Ohio, 1973

foot pedals and fuzz boxes I use. There are a lot of crescendos and diminuendos, and I have to keep level right with the pedals. But I admit I'm the most non-visual member of the band and I don't find it easy to be onstage."

Did Steve ever cherish the possibility of becoming a frontman?

"Not really. I'm pretty obscure, you know. I tried to form a band for two years and had 30 musicians passing through. We played two gigs.

"I used to play harmonica, so it was a kind of John Mayall situation without any gigs. The band had several names, as well, like Sarabande and Steel Pier. It was all down to lack of finance.

"I was one of the most regular advertisers in *Melody Maker* apart from A Able Accordionist. The style of the ads changed as time went on, from 'Blues guitarist/harmonica player' to 'Guitarist writer seeks receptive minds determined to strive beyond existing stagnant musical forms.' The last one – Genesis answered. It was a bit highbrow, but I still got a lot of nutters replying, obviously completely hopeless. I could never bring myself to tell them. In the end I had to say, I don't think we can work together. After Peter phoned up, we did two weeks' rehearsals and did our first gig, which was a disaster, of course. I forgot everything."

"When I first started to play guitar, my main influences were C, F, and G – they were good for the blues. I was a big fan of Jeff Beck and I still am. Eric Clapton, of course, and Peter Green. Then something happened. I'd go to Eel Pie Island a lot and hear all the blues guitarists. Then suddenly the magic didn't work. I'd come to the end of the blues. As I'd acquired more technique, I could understand more what they were playing, and the more I knew, the less the magic worked.

"When I joined this band, I thought I could improve the guitar department, which was more folky than it is now. I thought the acoustic side lacked drive. Now with the addition of Phil it has got much stronger. I could see what the band were trying to do and where it failed. I thought it could be polished up. And I can't emphasise enough the importance of the addition of the Mellotron. That gave us a whole new spectrum of sounds, and a wider perspective.

"I don't really like playing long solos, and prefer more short statements. You can say much more in two minutes than you can in 20. It's like drumming. A drum solo would be completely out of context in this band.

"I like to think we conjure up mental pictures for people and create moods. When Peter wears a flower on his head or shouts 'All change' it could mean nothing. But within the context of the music, it can help get the number across.

"We all relate to fantasy, although I'm a bit more down to earth. 'Get 'Em Out By Friday' is a more specific statement for me. I like John Lennon's lyrics. Simple, but effective. Bare bones and a bit more honesty, that's what I'd like."

CHRIS WELCH

MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 6, 1973

Melody Maker
RAINBOW GIANTS
Rock on the Wayne!

GENESIS have lain dormant throughout the summer, at least as far as the public was concerned. Then came the sensational appearance at Reading Festival, when Peter Gabriel rose as a vision upon a hydraulic ramp, ensconced inside a white pyramid. Of its significance, only the wind knows. But there's no doubting that Gabriel had once again stunned his audience with another in his series of ingenious and baffling visuals.

Of course, the group had not been idle. They had been toiling in basement studios rehearsing and recording what they feel is their finest album yet, *Selling England By The Pound*. And Reading was the farewell, at least in part, to their old act. Now a new British tour looms, and plans are afoot to make it their most exciting ever, fire regulations permitting.

Peter and lead guitarist Steve Hackett were consuming breakfast tea and toast at Peter's cosy flat in Notting Hill, London – where cats roam and postmen get lost – one morning this week. Settled at last on the sofa in a pocket-sized lounge, I attempted to question Peter forthrightly about the technicalities of their new stage act, making pertinent points about recording, the future of Genesis, the influence of rock on western society and the implications behind such impressive new compositions as "The Battle Of Epping Forest", a highlight of the album.

How did you enjoy your "farewell to the old act" at Reading Festival?

PETER: I don't think the music was very good.

STEVE: Your press write-up was very complimentary compared to the actual performance.

PETER: The reaction was very pleasing to us from that point of view. We've never had that sort of reaction at a festival before. We are always very sceptical about working in the open air. We work very much on atmosphere, and that's easier to create inside. We had a bit of power trouble, as well, which caused the long delay. It wasn't intentional.

What was the thinking behind the hydraulic ramp on which you appeared inside the white pyramid?

PETER: Oh, that was a sort of fairground gimmick. I really enjoyed that, actually. It was quite a tight area in which I was crammed, and it looked as if my body was all distorted. It's quite good for the science-fiction cosmos man.

JOHN LYNN KIRK/GETTY

Cymbal-ism: (l-r) Rutherford, Banks, Gabriel and Collins in rehearsals, 1974

DAVID WARNER ELLIS/GETTY

My legs were crossed, yes. The trouble was that the pyramid was a bit tighter than the one I've had before, and I had to fit my shoulders in corner to corner.

When are you going to float in space like the Mekon of Mekonta?
PETER: Well, with a laser beam projection I may be able to do that eventually.

So you weren't too happy about the band's last performance?
PETER: No, I don't think it was our best musically.
STEVE: I think it showed we had been off the road for some weeks.

So farewell to the old and on with the new. When does the tour start?
PETER: October 5. It's a bit thinner on dates than we originally intended. The new album is quite hard on the heels of the "live" epic.

Is this a wise move?
PETER: Well, I wasn't keen for the live album to be released, but it has served to introduce a lot of people to the band, which has been good. Due to a fault, and circumstances beyond our control, the shops have now run out of copies. But the live LP has sold better than *Foxtrot*. The thing about most of our albums in the past is they've been slow sellers. A lot are still selling on impulse sales.

Are you feeling confident about playing the new album material live on the tour?
PETER: Umm – I think we've got our side of it together. The trouble is with things like projection, which are all a bit haphazard at this precise point in time. There's not going to be as much back projection as we'd hoped. Originally we had a set designed for us, a huge inflatable thing, and this would also act as a screen, so one could get totally involved. Unfortunately, since the Summerland disaster [*when a fire killed 50 people at a leisure centre on the Isle of Man in 1973*], the definition of a fire risk has been tightened up. Before, if you put a match to it, and it didn't flare, it was OK. Now if it catches fire at all after holding the match there, you're in trouble, so we had to throw out our ideas, which is a drag. The plan had progressed a lot. The trouble is a lot of the places groups play include town halls where they don't have safety curtains over the stage. We have got a new set, developing slowly. Ideas come from everybody in the group.

"THE NEW LP HAS LONGER SOLOS – AT THE RISK OF BEING BORING. WE HOPE FANS STAY WITH US"
PETER GABRIEL

Don't you ever yearn for the days when you could just go out and play a gig without worrying about presentation?
PETER: Well, yes. I mean, we do sometimes and then think of doing one or two gigs with nothing at all, but as a band we are interested in getting across as much as we can and this seems the best way to do it. It's relevant entertainment. Ron Geesin will almost definitely be coming on tour with us. I've got to check up on him today. He's really excellent. I don't know him at all, but he's a very strong character. I think people will either love or hate us on the tour. There's no indifference.

What is the potential of the band in the coming year? How much bigger can it get?
PETER: I don't know – the answer lies with the album we've just made.
STEVE: It's the best thing we've ever done. The best played, the best material.
PETER: I'm never very objective about albums just after we've finished them. This one has more flow. We've fully explored the roots of the band on the past ones, when we've had contrast after contrast. The solos are longer on this one and we've played out things to their natural length. In the past we rather nervously tended to cut things short. The new one has longer solos – at the risk of being boring. We hope the fans will stay with us at any rate. They seemed to at Reading. There were a few shaven heads in the audience, I noticed.
STEVE: Those were just guys in the audience that we planted, actually.

Is there any significance in the title of the new album, *Selling England By The Pound*?
PETER: Well Christ, it's society's doom, innit? Flogging England by the pound. We've always been keen on telling stories which we know nothing about. We get off on fantasy, you know. I hate patriotism, but we try to be English, if you know what I mean. A lot of bands try to go American after their first tour there. I like America, New York has got a great feel about it, and it's a very exciting city, but as a visiting rock'n'roll band I think your experiences are limited and you don't get much artistic insight into the nature of the city.

PETER was fast developing an attack of the mumbles, and it was obvious he thought the music should be allowed to speak for itself. It is part of Gabriel's strange personality that he combines a charm, menace and eloquence onstage that is gripping, and a diffidence offstage that is equally disturbing. They talk of madness in great ones, and Genesis and its merry crew are, inherently, a great group. It is enough that their music should speak volumes. ●

CHRIS WELCH

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YES

An abundance of ideas creates a career played out on the edge, beset by seething undercurrents but rarely adrift. *By Jason Anderson*

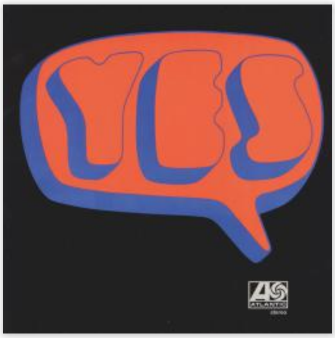
IN 2018, Yes celebrated the band's 50th anniversary in a manner that was entirely in keeping with their reputation for extraordinary displays of musicianship, thrilling songs of exceptional complexity and immediacy, and a degree of internal discord that may be unparalleled even in the fractious realm of progressive rock.

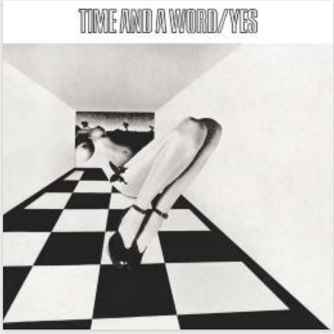
Of course, Yes fans are well used to having their loyalties torn because of the endless series of lineup changes, breakups and reconfigurations over the decades. Now they could choose to mark the half-centenary by seeing performances by one or both of the two iterations of the band doing anniversary tours. One was the five-man group currently operating under the Yes banner and featuring guitarist Steve Howe and drummer Alan White, neither of whom were founding members but are still key contributors to the imperial phase that began with their commercial breakthrough, *The Yes Album*, in 1971, strengthened through the twin triumphs of *Fragile* and *Close To The Edge*, survived the dodgier waters of *Tales From Topographic Oceans* and ended in the rancour that surrounded 1978's *Tormato*.

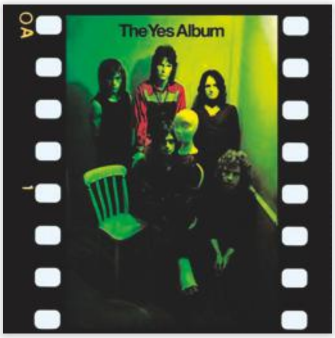
The other was titled YES Featuring ARW, a moniker whose use of capital letters may have suggested an unwieldy conflagration of acronyms but really only contained the ARW to denote its driving forces: co-founder and vocalist Jon Anderson, *90125*-era addition Trevor Rabin and the one and only Rick Wakeman.

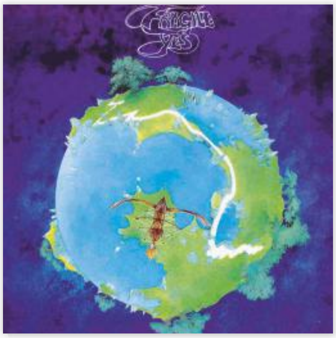
While these competing units could not agree to share the same stage, they each commemorated the milestone in the same way that every incarnation of Yes had done before: by releasing a lengthy live album with cover art by Roger Dean or a reasonable facsimile thereof. (This time, the designer gave the official honours to the Howe-led version for *Yes 50 Live*). Sadly, the 2015 passing of bassist and vocalist Chris Squire meant that neither Yes included the one player who'd been the closest thing the band ever had to a fixed point amid constant flux. Nor did Squire's death apparently neutralise the "seething undercurrents" that have always existed in Yes according to drummer Bill Bruford, who memorably described the group to biographer Chris Welch as "a very tight, highly structured, nerve-wracking organisation always short of money and always spending too much and always in trouble".

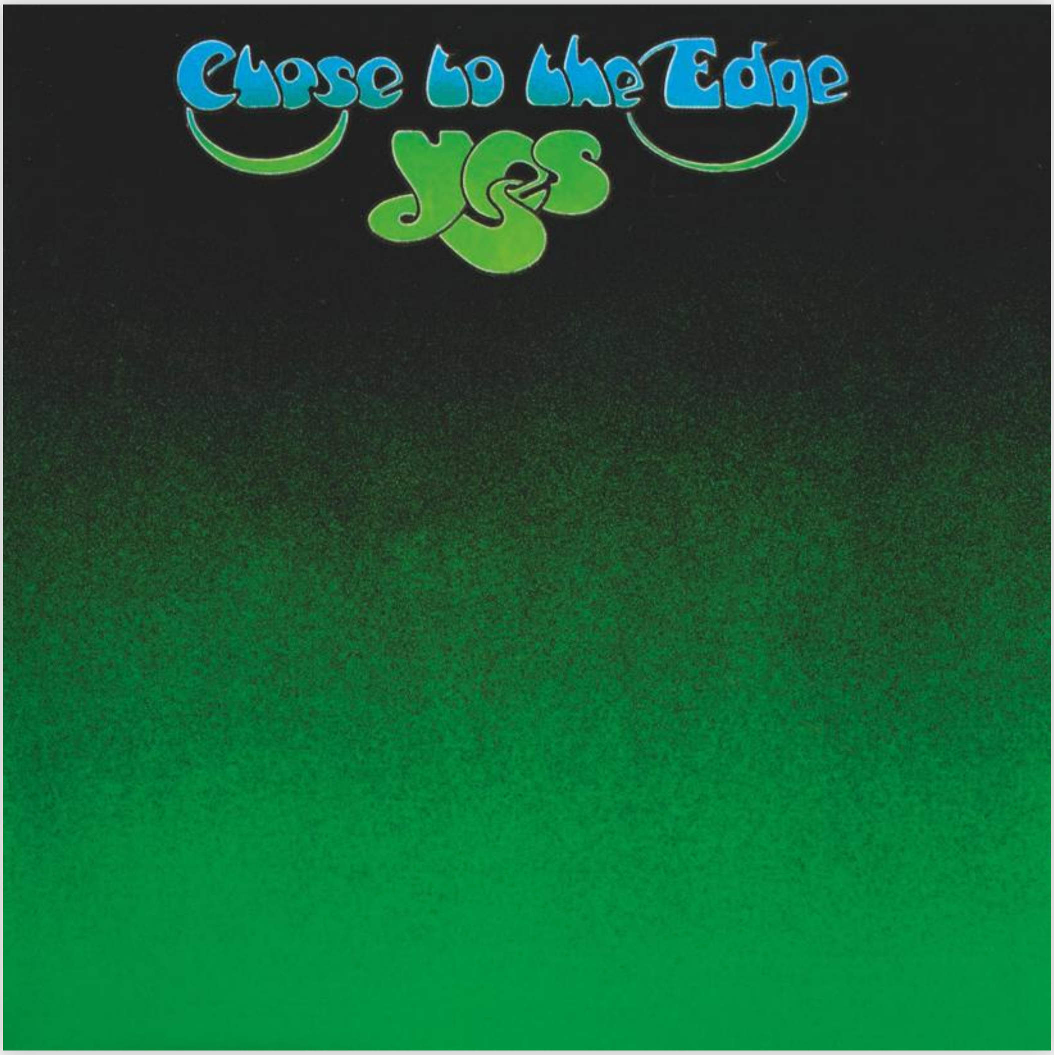
Yet the fact that both 2018-vintage versions acquitted themselves so satisfactorily at their respective tasks should not be surprising either. That's because the shared vision of what Yes could and should be has always been the sum that's greater than the individual parts, all of whom have turned out to be replaceable at one or more ➢




TIME AND A WORD/YES


The Yes Album


FRAGILE
YES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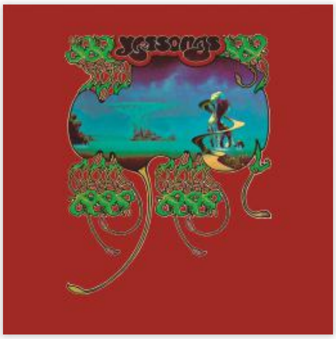
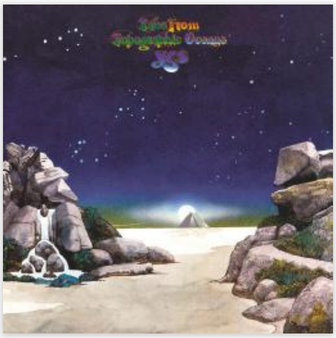
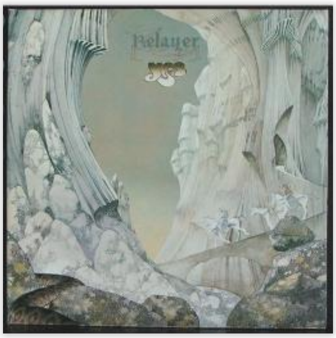



Tales From Topographic Oceans
YES


Relayer
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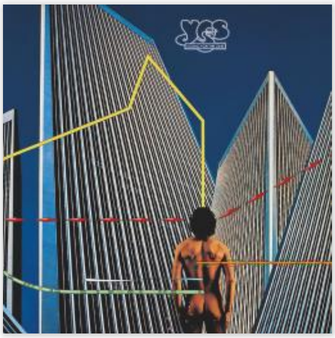
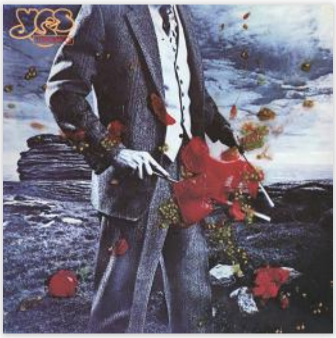
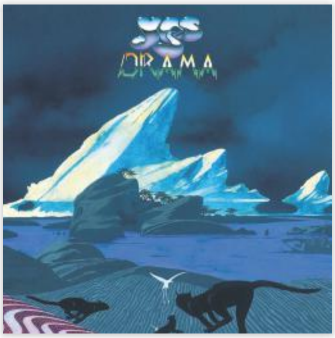
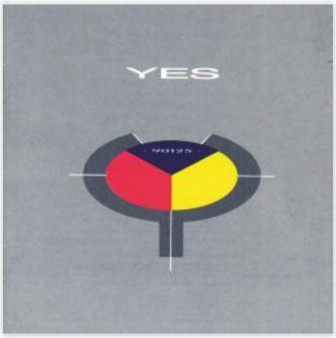








YES
ATLANTIC, 1969
7/10

TIME AND A WORD
ATLANTIC, 1970
7/10

THE YES ALBUM
ATLANTIC, 1971
9/10

FRAGILE
ATLANTIC, 1971
9/10

CLOSE TO THE EDGE
ATLANTIC, 1972
9/10

YESSONGS
ATLANTIC, 1973
8/10

TALES FROM TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS
ATLANTIC, 1973
6/10

RELAYER
ATLANTIC, 1974
7/10

GOING FOR THE ONE
ATLANTIC, 1977
8/10

TORMATO
ATLANTIC, 1978
6/10

DRAMA
ATLANTIC, 1980
6/10

90125
ATCO, 1983
8/10

SOMETHING IS COMING
DEAR FATHER
YES
ATLANTIC
ATLANTIC
K 10999 (3416)
45 rpm Made in UK
A
3.45
STEREO
WONDEROUS STORIES (Anderson) (From the album K 50379: GOING FOR THE ONE) YES
Arranged & Produced by Yes

(Top) Yes, August '69: (l-r) Chris Squire, Jon Anderson, Tony Kaye, Peter Banks, Bill Bruford

GEORGE WILKES/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES, PETE STILL/REDFERNS

episodes in this long-running serial. Somehow all parties have fostered a remarkable sense of creative cohesion even if the proverbial centre could never hold for long.

That's a testament to what Anderson and Squire were able to forge in their original decade of partnership, which began when La Chasse owner and scene-maker Jack Barrie introduced the two at his Soho nightspot in the spring of 1968. Though they had much in common as young musicians with working-class backgrounds, there was much that separated the two. The loquacious Lancashire-bred singer had been busy, first as the frontman for The Warriors then with a few prettier, poppier singles under the pseudonym of Hans Christian. More laid-back by nature though equally ambitious, Squire was a former choirboy whose schooling in church music lined up well with Anderson's love of harmony vocals.

There were more dramatic divergences when it came to the musical affinities of the rest of the original lineup as Yes emerged out of Mabel Greer's Toyshop, the psych band that featured Squire and guitarist Peter Banks. Whereas keyboardist Tony Kaye leaned more mod in his sensibilities and on his beloved Hammond, drummer Bill Bruford clung to the hope he'd joined a jazz band. (He'd finally form one called Earthworks in between and after his various tenures with Yes and King Crimson.)

Consequently, the first recordings bristle with an air of restlessness as common ground was discovered and conquered. An extraordinary take of The Byrds' "I See You" on the band's 1969 self-titled debut is one of the many radically altered and extended cover versions that filled their early repertoire. Here is the sound of five precociously gifted musicians who are thrilled to have figured out how to synthesise components – the three-part harmonies born out of Anderson's devotion to The Association and Simon & Garfunkel, Banks' acid-rock guitar lines, Kaye's funky Hammond and the tricky, quick-change rhythms by Squire and Bruford – that were irreconcilable to anyone else. What yoked them together was the players' collective urge to push beyond The Beatles with songs that matched compositional complexity with pop immediacy. The other rule for the fast-evolving sound of Yes: no blues licks.

The lack thereof may have been why Atlantic regarded their first UK signing as a folk act – and focused much more on breaking Led Zeppelin. Pressured to hop on the strings-and-brass bandwagon started by Deep Purple's *Concerto For Group And Orchestra*, Yes made their identity harder to discern with 1970's fine *Time And A Word*. Only intermittently was the young band able to cut through the clutter in the overly busy arrangements for "The Prophet" and "Astral Traveller". But a European tour with Iron Butterfly – after which they acquired the heavy rockers' innovative PA set-up – helped sharpen the focus, as did the decision to replace Banks with Steve Howe.

As he demonstrated throughout his first tenure with Yes, the guitarist introduced yet more elements thanks not only to his psych pedigree in Tomorrow but his affinities for flamenco, baroque music and Chet Atkins.

A new partnership with engineer Eddy Offord, and the band's increasing acumen when it came to recording technology, led to another evolutionary leap. But however many tape edits were required to construct the songs on *The Yes Album*, they remain vital, urgent and shockingly coherent given the number of ideas they contain. Though internal tensions would ultimately have a rather more negative effect, here they benefit from a pronounced state of agitation as conflicting instincts are marshalled behind shared ambitions. Unexpected juxtapositions and transitions abound, with the music's swirl of activity becoming even more bewildering thanks to Anderson's freeform lyrics, which were increasingly steeped in his interests in Eastern religions.

Yes's increasing acumen with recording technology led to another evolutionary leap

The third album's "I've Seen All Good People" became a key step in the bonding process between Yes and journalists, programmers and punters alike. As the two-part track unfolds over seven captivating minutes, the beauty of the vocal harmonies is initially enhanced by gentler accompaniment before the song is hijacked by the boogie-friendly rhythm section and the astonishingly dexterous Howe.

The swings between extremes would seem even more pronounced – and more thrilling – when the band jettisoned another original member to acquire a free agent. This time it was Wakeman, a more garrulous figure than Yes was used to but one who added another dose of firepower. He also supplied a little cheek to the proceedings via contributions like "Cans And Brahms", a quasi-classical interlude that provides a respite from the high-wire intensity that otherwise defines *Fragile* (1971).

What with Yes's increasing affection for multi-part compositions, it's tempting to see *Fragile* and the following year's *Close To The Edge* as a band-defining diptych that encapsulates all the major musical elements in a manner that's consistently economical. While that last adjective may seem strange when used in relation to anything that tops the 10-minute mark – or, indeed, anything to do with prog – songs like *Close To The Edge*'s swaggering "Siberian Khatru" epitomise the genre at its most ruthlessly direct and to-the-point. A triple album that was the first of the innumerable number of live albums in their career, *Yessongs* (1973) is another essential document of the band in peak form.

Alas, mere mortals can't maintain that kind of focus for long. Sure enough, the good men of Yes – minus Bruford, who helped put Plastic Ono Band vet Alan White in his seat before leaving for Crimson – struggled to keep their collective eye on the ball during the grueling process that yielded *Tales From Topographic Oceans*. Inspired by a series of sacred Hindu texts – lines like *"Our endless caresses for the freedom of life everlasting/Talk to the sunlight caller"* were overripe for interpretation – the four-part, 81-minute work contained passages of great fluidity and many that were turgid to the point of being indigestible. Wakeman hated it, which explains why his presence is so

No blues allowed: Wakeman at the New Victoria Theatre, London, 1976

YES
DON'T KILL THE WHALE

(Above, left) Yes live on the *Going For The One* tour, Wembley Arena, October 28, 1977

limited, even in the invaluable remix-slash-restoration job by Porcupine Tree's Steven Wilson released in 2016.

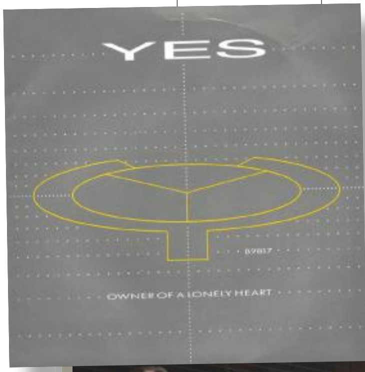
The album's mixed-to-negative critical reception and Wakeman's post-tour departure helped establish another pattern that would serve Yes well in the years to come: an ability to regroup and refocus in the face of setbacks and fissures that would have doomed others. Recorded in Switzerland with keyboardist Patrick Moraz (who would himself be re-replaced by Wakeman in 1976), 1974's fusion-influenced *Relayer* best demonstrated that renewal of gusto in "The Gates Of Delirium", a Tolstoy-inspired epic that was their most successfully realised long-form piece to date.

Sensing the ground shifting in the music world, the band opted for a more concise approach when they finished an inaugural round of solo albums and returned to the fray with 1977's *Going For The One*. Mind you, no newly minted punk was going to abide Yes songs that remained as elaborate or richly adorned as "Turn Of The Century", but there was a new sense of focus and even fury even in "Awaken", the one track that topped 15 minutes largely thanks to the frenetic to-and-fro between Howe and a clearly re-energised Wakeman. The band also scored their biggest ever chart single with "Wonderous Stories", a folky charmer that highlighted their capacity for elegance. And while the rock press may have moved on to newer, rawer enthusiasms than Yes, readers' polls results confirmed their continued dominance in punk's year zero.

But these outward signs of health and unity proved to be illusory – instead, the band's two founders were nearing the end of the fruitful first phase for a partnership that would be decidedly intermittent from this point forward. Tensions rose through the making of 1978's *Tormato*, a much more erratic effort than its predecessor. With its half-hearted flirtations with disco and heavy rock, "Don't Kill The Whale" was one sign the band had lost their rudder. "Release, Release" was even more baffling as an attempt to get hip to the new wave. "Rock is the medium of our generation," Anderson sang over what sounded like a misbegotten jam between The Vibrators and ELP: *"Stand for every right, kick it out, hear you shout/For the right of all of creation."*

While *Tormato* may have deserved the genuine tomato stains Hipgnosis used on the cover, it was nonetheless a commercial success, as was the accompanying stage show with its vanguard in-the-round design. But the ever-worsening acrimony and financial conflicts caused Anderson and Wakeman to walk out on the sessions for *Tormato*'s follow-up in Paris in the autumn of 1979.

This rift would have marked the end in a more conventional and predictable sort of rock saga. Instead, it was more like the turning point in a Marvel comic book when the budding superhero gains invulnerability by wholly implausible means. In the case of Yes, those means were Squire's controversial decision to draft in Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes – two ardent Yes devotees who'd found success as The Buggles – to finish *Drama* (1980). Though the gambit seemed a failure when fans did not take to the new Anderson-less version and the musicians finally scattered to the winds, Horn's production wizardry would be a crucial factor in Yes's unlikely rebirth.



Yes in 1983: (l-r) Alan White, Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Tony Kaye, Trevor Rabin

With Anderson busy with Jon And Vangelis, and Howe and Downes gearing up for the supergroup Asia, Howe, White and the long-absent Tony Kaye embarked on a new band with South African singer-guitarist Trevor Rabin to be named Cinema, with Horn producing. When Squire played Rabin's demos to Anderson after a chance meeting in Los Angeles, the stage was set for something no-one could've expected. This tricked-out, '80s-model Yes would soon be bigger than any previous iteration. And for all of *90125*'s slickness, there was no denying the power of "Owner Of A Lonely Heart" or the ingenuity of "Leave It", a Horn masterstroke that took Yes's trademark vocal harmonies to a whole new level.

Like every incarnation of Yes that followed, this one wasn't built to last. By the decade's end, the band had begun its perpetual cycle of division and reconfiguration as the Rabin-and-Squire-led Yes competed for legitimacy and supremacy with the unfortunately monikered but surprisingly robust group known as Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe.

Thankfully, through it all, that collective idea of Yes would persist, all of those divergent ideas and ambitions cohering once again into music of rare grace, power and oddly endearing pomposity. A standout of the mid-'90s reunion of the mid-'70s lineup, the 18-minute "Mind Drive" on *Keys To Ascension II* is vivid proof that old fires still burned. Likewise, Howe's quicksilver fretwork on the closing rendition of "Starship Trooper" on last year's *Yes 50 Live* is another reminder of the wilder energies and broiling undercurrents that propelled Yes to greatness whenever they weren't tearing the band asunder. Given the evidence, there's no reason to believe they won't somehow last the century. ●

EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS, ANDREW PUTLER/REDFERNS

"We're a people's band"

1972: As YESmania engulfs the States, Jon Anderson finds himself disgusted by "vulgar" Vegas, Bill Bruford finds it all too much and Rick Wakeman sends Chris Welch a blood-stained letter from America...

MELODY MAKER APRIL 22, 1972

Melody Maker
ROCK FIGHTS REPRESSION!
Cocker on crutches

HOW powerful is Jon Anderson? Of all the lead singers among groups, his role is possibly the hardest to define. And his personality is the most difficult to crystallise into succinct terms.

For Jon is apparently a quiet, almost diffident character, dwelling in a dream world, with a vivid if sometimes confused imagination. He has a mass of thoughts which he sometimes finds hard to convey with lucidity.

And yet... the soft exterior and gentle smile can be misleading. For Jon is a dreamer who gets it on. Despite the powerful personalities in Yes like eloquent Bill Bruford, determined Chris Squire, flamboyant Rick Wakeman and showman Steve Howe – Jon is the leader.

Yes have always tended to dismiss the concept of their having a leader. It's a cooperative band and they play cooperative music. It's often a loud band, and Jon has a husky voice. And he doesn't even move on stage, apart from shake the occasional pair of maracas or beat time with his tambourine.

Watching a Yes concert, with all the intricacies, subtleties and roaring dominance of the music, it often appears that Jon is floating in an aura, slightly above them. One of the most significant moments in their performance comes after the long build-up of the first line of "America". The band pause in their machinations and Jon, quiet and positive, leans across to the microphone and says: "Let us be lovers, we'll marry our fortunes together." ➢

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Going for the one: Jon Anderson on stage in Rotterdam, 1972

Like Churchill it's as if all his life had been leading up to that moment. And if it doesn't seem too grandiose a term to be using in terms of running a successful rock band, Jon's hour of destiny is at hand.

One of the pleasures of observing the rock scene is seeing deserving talents get on and hard work rewarded. It's gratifying for those that knew them as beatniks to see such merry men as Rod Stewart, Marc Bolan, the Faces, elevating to stardom.

Jon may never cause Anderson mania, but he has come a tidy step from the days when we stood together outside an abattoir in Cork, wondering how to get back to England from a festival gig that never was.

For the first time, Yes are financially secure after years of almost permanent debt. And their music has been gladly embraced by the vast audience for rock at home and abroad.

It needs a certain amount of power and energy to get to such a happy position. And it needs strength of character to weld the individuals of Yes.

Jon is still the quester who likes an acoustic to strum and a cigarette to smoke. But there is a firmer tone to his voice, capable of making direct decisions to circumvent muddle.

In the last few months, he and his wife Jenny have moved home about half a dozen times, not to dodge the world, but to try to get a firmer grip. Even if you have the bread, home hunting in London is now a notoriously difficult pursuit, and Jon has been "gazumped" several times, as owners up their prices in a scramble for profit.

In a breathing space between their third and most successful tour of America and two-week holiday, Jon and Jenny cooked scrambled eggs in the kitchen of a basement off Earls Court Road. Jenny had to go out and book their holiday in the sun, and Jon chatted enthusiastically about… everything he could cast his mind to. His soft North Country tones remained unaffected by the endless travelling, and he pronounced that Las Vegas, the peak of civilisation, was "daft".

THAT faraway look crept into Jon's eyes that always convinces me that Lobsang Rampa is right about the silver cord and extraterrestrial consciousness.

"Where are you, Jon?" I murmured.

"I'm sitting in the pictures in Accrington," he sighed. "I wish myself away and think I'm going to play a gig in Germany tomorrow, or America, but everybody else in the pictures will be staying at home."

That is just what Jon used to imagine when he was an earnest lad with ideas above his station.

He is only just beginning to realise that he is not sitting in the pictures any more, and it's actually happening all around him.

"Sometime it's going to hit me, that I really don't have any financial worries any more. But there are always other worries which are equally frustrating. Sometime the crunch will come. But I've never really been concerned about money anyway.

"All the energy I have put into my life for the past five years has come back to me, and now all the good things are coming into my life…" Jon paused to ponder the problems this in itself might cause.

The cause of much of this baffling wealth has been the sale of two successful albums and many packed concerts in the US. He cast his memory back to that hectic period earlier this year.

"We played solidly for six weeks and we only had three days off. The first day we got snowed in. We went to Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas – and it was like Butlin's. We saw Lena Horne there and the place was filled with hundreds of middle-aged Americans who go to Las Vegas to throw their money away. Nobody ever wins. The Palace is an amazing place – it cost 64 million dollars to build, and they herd everybody in to seat 10 people at a table, and they only go because it's Caesar's Palace.

"You read about Tom Jones in Vegas, and you think, 'That's cool, maybe I'd like to play Vegas.' But the show is so pretentious and obviously styled for ignorant people. A comedian comes out and says how ridiculous it is for them to be there, eating terrible food, and they all applaud a guy who's telling them the truth. It's very comical. I couldn't understand it at all.

"WE HAVEN'T HAD ANY HYPE. WE'VE JUST MOVED ON THE MUSIC AND TRIED TO IMPROVE IT"
JON ANDERSON

"There is a section of Las Vegas where they lead normal lives, but the showbusiness side is schmaltzy, it's evil.

"I couldn't get over the town. It's so vulgar, we called it space city. There is so little of value or quality, but I'm glad we saw it and I've learnt a lot. I also lost 20 dollars.

"The restaurants never close and never get dirty and they never have any conversation. 'What do you want? That'll be a dollar fifty.' That's all they can say. If you tried to start a conversation like, 'What a nice day,' they wouldn't reply because they didn't know how to talk.

"A woman came into the restaurant every 20 minutes wearing a completely different set of clothes. She was trying to sell them, and she talked about them like a machine that had been switched on. We couldn't stop laughing because she wasn't really communicating with anybody. It was just straight selling. It could have been a robot talking. In fact, they could all have been robots."

A couple of gold albums in their frames caught my eye, while Jon considered being down in the jungle living in a tent, cheaper than a prefab – no rent.

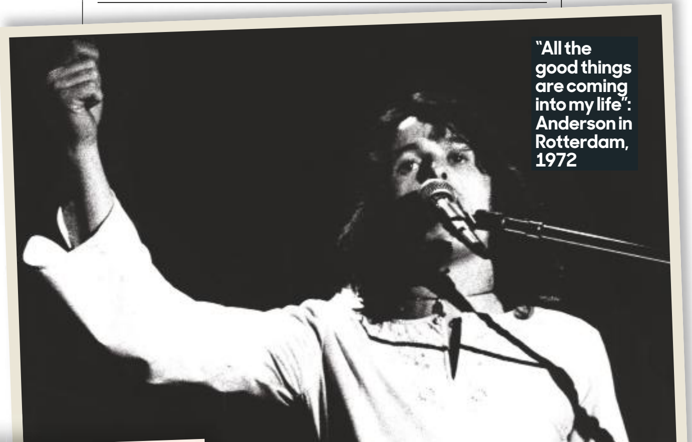
"It's probably Bing Crosby's *Greatest Hits*," smiled Jon at the gold-sprayed records labelled '*Fragile*' and '*The Yes Album*'.

"The Who smashed theirs up. Great! They've had so many, I suppose. I've never kept scrap books or anything, but I suppose they are nice to keep. I was very surprised that *The Yes Album* didn't take off in the States. But it was *Fragile* there and *Yes Album* here.

"We were lucky to tour with Jethro Tull the first time because we were virtually unknown there a year ago. In a way something was bound to happen when we got there. It isn't a question of how many records we sold, but whether the group is fulfilled and honest in making the LPs as compatible entertainment on plastic."

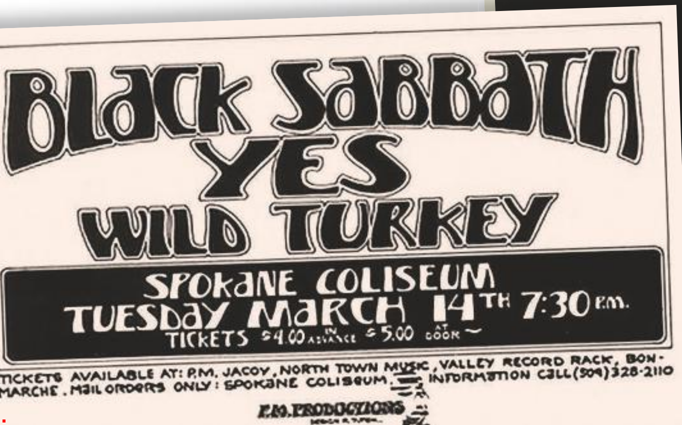
WITH such a huge audience to play to who expect something in approximation to the records, was there still room for chance and experiment in Yes?

"Oh yeah. It's surprising how a song goes through instant development. You can't keep playing the same thing every night anyway because you would become a machine. At the same time you have to remember most people haven't seen us before and we must not get self-indulgent. A guy in Connecticut might tell a friend in Boston – 'Go and see them.' And he goes because he wants to hear what he's been told about. Basically we are an entertainment. We can be self-indulgent, or we can work for the people, and that's what we want to do. Yes are a people's band. We haven't had any hype. We've just moved on the music and tried to improve it. That's what we set out to do from the first. ➢



"All the good things are coming into my life": Anderson in Rotterdam, 1972

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/GETTY



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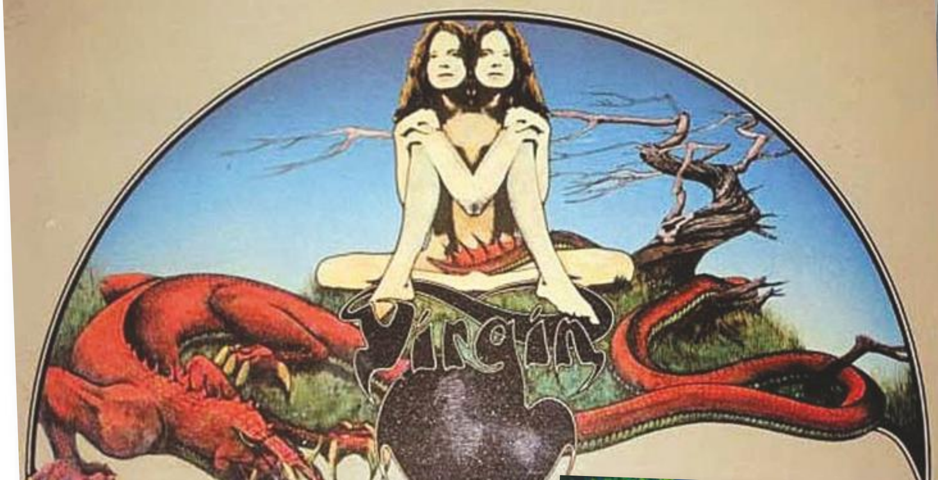
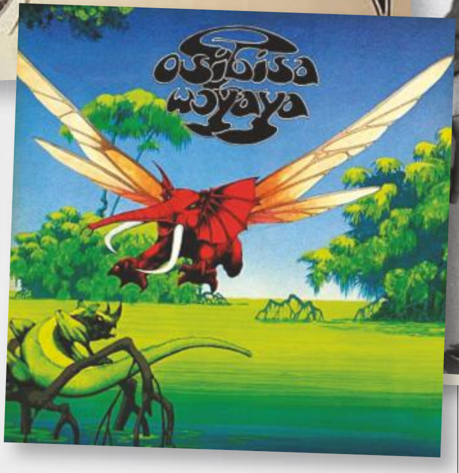




Roger Dean in 1972; (left, from top) his designs for Virgin, Osibisa and Yes

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

"ILLUSTRATIONS SAY SOMETHING"

Roger Dean's cover versions

MELODY MAKER APRIL 29, 1972

Melody Maker
Bolan
Asylum giants fly in

YOU can tell a Roger Dean cover most times by the strange little jagged monsters that work their way out of his prehistoric fantasies. Over the last three years Dean has become one of the most sought-after album sleeve designers... from Osibisa and Yes to Motown Chartbusters. His work is even being sought after by some London art galleries.

Dean lives in a large workshop flat near South Kensington Tube station in a small community of artists, including his brother, who designs furniture, and a dressmaker. Through the flat, past the dining room which acts as a dressmaking workroom, and you enter into a fantasy world that has been created by Dean for album sleeves. A world that is every bit as compelling as the standard of the music he is packaging.

Little books of drawings done when he was studying furniture design at Canterbury Art School and the Royal College of Art in London sit on shelves in the room with his bed built up above the floor on a platform. Open them up, and the ideas that now sit on covers are inside.

Until three years ago, Roger was working exclusively on furniture design with his brother Martin. They were commissioned to work on the furniture for the upstairs at Ronnie Scott's club in London, bumped into the manager of Gun and Roger asked to design the cover for their first album.

That cover now looks a bit like a very bad copy of a Roger Dean cover. But at the time it carried a lot of influence in cover designing. It moved away from the standard picture-and-graphics cover that has been popular for a decade. Dean managed to capture, probably more so than the music, the fantasy world of rock.

Dean – a quiet, unassuming, almost shy person nursing a broken wrist at the moment – wondered why we should want to interview him. But he does see the importance of a good sleeve, and believes that it can help bands who are struggling to sell records. Retailers, he says, like to uses sleeves in window displays. And the better the sleeve, the more chance it has.

"Some people don't seem to realise the importance of a sleeve," says Roger. "I have no idea how useful the Osibisa sleeves were for them, but they must have made some impression on people."

The flying elephant on the Osibisa covers, flying through a fantasy world, about to make contact with a grisly lizard, was originally an idea for Virgin Records. It was used for one of their early adverts but when Virgin dropped it in favour of the double-sided girl, Dean resurrected the animal from his sketch books.

The music that is going to be inside his covers does not mean a lot to Dean; he doesn't listen to the sounds and then design the illustration to fit. With Osibisa, though, he was drawn into their music by David Howells, A&R man at MCA. He went along to gigs with them and became acquainted with their music.

"I think, to be honest," said Dean, "the music has never influenced me. But I do like to have the music around. I think Osibisa was a classic example of someone making me aware of the band. I don't find music inspirational at all. Ideas mainly come from the title or something else.

"With illustrations you can say anything, you can have any fantasy. Graphics are used for the quick ideas; it's a joke, it's an idea.

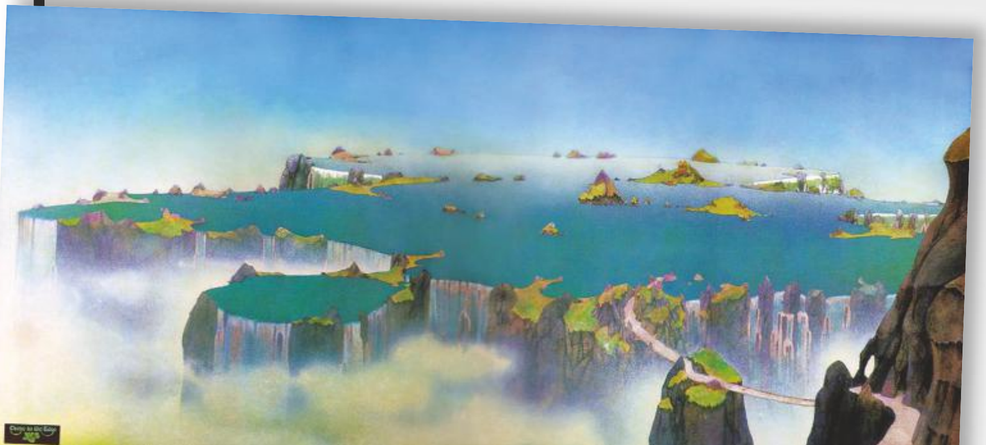
"I think a lot of the stuff, like the Osibisa idea, has to give someone a fairyland, instead of just Africa – an Africa that is as much fairyland as anything else."

As well as covers, Dean has designed logos... including the Harvest logo for EMI and the grotesque fly on the centre of Fly records. The Harvest logo perhaps captures Dean at this inventive best – although the graphics, which are not his, are not so good as the logo itself.

Dean is expensive now, charging three-figure sums. And he thinks that perhaps he too should get a percentage of the album. He feels that with certain albums, his covers have had a lot to do with getting them off the ground. And so he believes a royalty would be fairer. But that brings in problems: *Fragile* sold more than any other Yes album in Britain – and is still doing so – but it was definitely not due to his cover. So where would record companies draw the line and say royalty for this and not that? Roger doesn't really know.

He also owns the copyright to his designs, and makes a point of making sure that he gets his original artwork back from record companies – which is not always easy. There are companies he especially likes to work for, who allow him time to get a cover done without hustling him over timetables. Keep hold of Dean covers, for if specialists are right, he and other designers are producing sought-after collector's pieces.

MARK PLUMMER



"We never became a blues band or a jazz band. Basically we have no direction. We can go anywhere. If we had a direction it was to good singing and good music.

"I wouldn't stand up and say we are doing anything new. It would be so easy for someone to put us down if we said it was new music. We just hope that it's a kind of music where all the barriers have fallen down. And that's happening all around. Dannie Richmond, one of the finest jazz drummers, can now play with a group like Mark-Almond, who are a very good band."

"I remember when Jimi Hendrix and Roland Kirk played together. I was utterly amazed at how well they blended together at Ronnie Scott's that time. Jimi just got up and started to play and it was tremendous.

"If we can learn from all this music, as we teach ourselves, so we teach our audience to respect other music rather than just rock music. The finest singer I know is Gilbert Bécaud. I wish I could do what he does. I'd be too afraid to go on a stage with just a guitar and sing. I've never done it and the nearest I came to it was with Peter, when we did an acoustic number together."

"I was always scared then, and my knees used to tremble. I've got a lot to learn about being an entertainer. That's why I stand pretty rigid on stage. I haven't got much stage presence, especially when you see somebody like Rod Stewart. But if I jig up and down I think, 'Oh, Joe Cocker used to do that.' But I have been going crazy with my tambourine lately!

"The excitement for me comes from people accepting our music. Eddy Offord came to record some of it live on the tour and now he has joined the group. We're hoping to form a company and get our own recording studio. And next year we'll be getting a quad PA. We've got three roadies now because we need a good road crew. If things aren't plugged in right, we go crazy.

"The musicians in the band are getting so good, but as more people buy our albums then we have a greater responsibility to the public. The only thing we can do now is make good music. It's not an egotistical thing, it's a sensible attitude. I just feel a little humble that 10 years ago I was working on a farm in Accrington. Most rock musicians today are very lucky. Most young people in the past would have been fighting wars."

Jon rummaged around in his bedroom and produced a cassette tape of a gig. "Listen to Steve's solo. This was on 'Yours Is No Disgrace', in Dundee about six months ago. I was just playing some old tapes the other night and his solo really stood out. Over the last year, he has really blossomed out.

Jon maintains a fervent interest in his band and fellow musicians that has not been rendered blasé by success. Far from being tired or bored, the band seem to have attained an output of energy that becomes almost explosive.

And after four years of toil and music making, it might be that Yes have only just begun to tap their full potential. ***CHRIS WELCH***

"WHEN BILL BRUFORD LEFT, I THINK HE WANTED TO LOOK AT MUSIC FROM ANOTHER ANGLE"

CHRIS SQUIRE

MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 14, 1972

Melody Maker
WIN A DRUM KIT
SANTANA OSMONDS DUE
Group boss lashes touts

YES are such a tightly woven musical endeavour, that a sudden departure from the ranks has much more impact and importance than in most other bands. If the drummer quits Reg Catsmeat and His Rhythm Boys, well, that's just too bad.

But when Bill Bruford quit Yes, it seemed like a prime mover and original inspiration had gone. What difference did his departure last month make and how had Alan White settled into one of the more difficult percussion chairs in rock?

Said Chris Squire, "Bill leaving was very odd. When he announced his intentions we presumed he wanted to get a different viewpoint for his drumming. He felt he could get something different by working with Bob Fripp that he couldn't get with us. I hope it works out.

"Playing with Alan is equally enjoyable. It's a case of some things people can do better than others. Obviously Bill can play some things better than Alan, but Alan can play things Bill can't. As drummers go – they are equally good. And after our tour with Alan, his playing is really excellent.

"My playing hasn't changed really, but Alan pushes you along. Bill had some strange ideas about hitting the snare drum when he should

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/GETTY

Yes men: (l-r) Steve Howe, Jon Anderson, Rick Wakeman, Bill Bruford and Chris Squire, Rotterdam, '72

Close to the edge (corner pocket): Rick Wakeman in 1972

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

have been hitting the bass drum, and the other way round. Alan is heavier, but although he has made his name working with Balls and John Lennon, he's into settling down and being more than just a sideman. He wants to be a part of the group."

Was Bill's departure a shock? "Yes… We went to the studio for a mixing session and it was laid upon us when Jon said something important had happened. Bill had told Jon the night before.

"Interestingly enough, Yes seem to thrive on setbacks. The more that is thrown in our face, the harder we work and try to come up with something better. A lot of groups just give up and give in. But I really think this will be a lasting situation and I can't see any reason for anyone else leaving now, until after the group breaks up in 10 years' time.

"There is so much more potential in the band and I still can't figure out why Bill left. There was no bad personal relationship, and I can only think he wanted to take a look at music from another angle. He could have advanced himself with us just as much as with Bob Fripp.

"Strangely enough, Yes is a well-balanced group, and is the reason we are successful. It's not a good thing to abuse it. We should think of the public who put us there. We should try the hardest we can."

Part of trying hard is devoted to improving Yes's stage presentation. And the big tours they make of America help finance their growth. "Basically we have to spend a lot of money to put the Yes show on the road, because of the care and trouble we take. We spend a tremendous amount on equipment and the more we earn, the more we spend. It's really endless. No sooner have we got it all sorted out, than someone wants something new.

"It's even got to the stage where we take a spare Moog synthesiser on tour, and a spare Mellotron. We don't use it, but we take it around with us – in case. In the States we use a 100-foot articulated truck to carry the equipment. It was the most amazing sight I've ever seen.

"We have a road crew of three and Eddy Offord in charge of the sound. And Michael Tate organises the lights. We get letters saying: 'Why do Yes only work in America?' Well the point is English audiences had us for three-and-a-half years, when they didn't complain if they saw us or not. And it's not just the money. It's a good feeling to work in the States. The promoters are so efficient. One feels everybody is working to put on a good show."

Returning to the subject of Alan, how did he actually get to join the band? "It was more or less by accident really. He knew Eddy Offord from a few sessions they had done together. He expressed an interest in the group and said he liked what we were doing. He mentioned to Eddy how much he'd enjoy playing with us.

"I liked what he had been doing with Joe Cocker, but he was capable of a lot more technique than he'd been rated for. His playing with us was a pleasant surprise. He's been through all the technique thing and he gets more enjoyment out of playing with people, rather than playing flam-triplets.

"The band sounds different now – it must. But none of us could tell you exactly how. You'll have to tell me. Certainly I'm sure the band will seem more solid and I gel more with Alan than I did with Bill. There have been some changes, but I can't define it." ***CHRIS WELCH***

MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 14, 1972

Melody Maker

WIN A DRUM KIT

SANTANA OSMONDS DUE

Group boss lashes touts

IN neat inked capitals, Rick wrote from the Hotel Sonesta in Hartford, Connecticut one night, to while away the hours twixt gigs.

Says Rick: "Imagine: You're bigger than Kellogg's Corn Flakes in Manchester, but nobody's ever heard of you in Leicester. The problem can be eased by doing some gigs in Leicester as distances are minimal in Britain. Not so easy in America, when similar problems arise, and unfortunately a few Transatlantic statements are giving false impressions of bands' status because of this.

"New York State alone is bigger than Britain, and many a band knows the hard work and belief it takes in their music to break in Britain, so imagine if you had fifty Britains to break in?

"Very few bands make it everywhere here. Some well-known English bands here at the moment are sending back incredible reviews of the odd places they sold out. (The sixteen concerts that they either bombed out of, or were cancelled because of low advance ticket sales, are usually kept very quiet.) Which is the reason why a lot of American bands want to break in Britain.

"If you're accepted in Britain, then you're guaranteed a hearing in America; but that hearing will be highly critical and being accepted in Britain doesn't guarantee you a mansion in the country, courtesy of America.

"Concert production is down to a fine art here. The PA is always one hundred percent. Schedules are tight, backstage passes are gold dust, and soundchecks are guaranteed –that is, if you're headlining. If you're not, it means rushing on to check and tune seven keyboards between the warm-up band's set and yours. The headline act takes all the soundcheck time.

"Now we're headlining. I can't remember the last time a supporting band managed a soundcheck. It's not deliberate, just an understanding that the headliners get the perks. But they also have the problems of getting involved musically and spiritually with an audience that has already sat through two hours of music.

"America has its advantages, though, for the untiring listener. Its radio set up here is superb. Every town is littered with AM and stereo FM stations, run commercially and playing wide selections of music 24 hours a day. The radio is almost an audio *Melody Maker*.

"The American Musicians Union has banned the sale of Mellotrons, so the instrument well-used by an English band is as rare as arriving on stage in your own helicopter.

"Which brings me to my next point… transport.

"The majority of domestic airlines in America are money grabbers. For the first two tours, they made us purchase seats for each guitar we took on board. As our status improved on the third tour, we reckoned that if we travelled first class they wouldn't charge us for them. However, they charged us for first class seats instead.

"Also the men who unload the equipment at airports seem to suffer very badly from illiteracy and hatred of other people's property. Cases bearing the word 'Fragile' or 'This Way Up' are invariably dropped from 15 feet – the other way up. By the time the fourth tour starts, it is economic to charter your own plane.

"It is very worrying to notice the growing barrier between the police and audiences here. We actually witnessed police at one concert here kicking and beating some kids because a few stood up and came to the front of the stage. A far cry from a recent concert in Scotland where the police came round after the gig for a drink.

"Basically playing America is a gas. Breaking new ground means meeting new people, making new friends and drinking more beer.

"The musical rewards from Yes are endless. Attempting to forget a problem-ridden Crystal Palace, the band hasn't looked back since Bill left, and I'm convinced will continue to progress for some years yet." ● ***CHRIS WELCH***

SELLING BY THE ENGLISH POUND

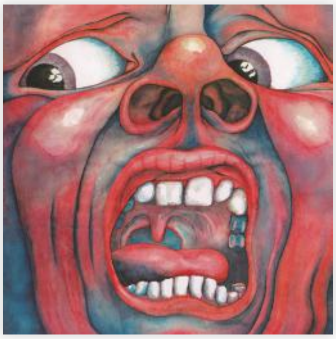
The 20 most collectable prog albums* *By Mark Bentley*

GO to a decent second-hand record shop, ignore the racks, and look at the rare, precious and beautiful albums they've chosen to display on the wall. Half of them are prog, right? There's something about a progressive rock album that feels intrinsically desirable: the industry-standard elliptical artwork (thanks, Roger Dean, Hipgnosis et al), the preponderance of gatefold, the intricate paper engineering on the sleeves (think Tull's newspapery *Thick As A Brick*, or ELP's fold-out *Brain Salad Surgery*). And so it is that prog is one of the most collectable genres out there, and its famous labels – Harvest, Vertigo, Deram, Charisma, Virgin – are a mark of artistic quality.

Understanding what's collectable, and why, is key. It's not just about rarity – although you'll note a few hens'-teeth-rare records in our highly subjective, in-no-way comprehensive list below, which focuses unapologetically on UK releases. Condition is obviously vital, but so is supply and demand. There is a clear theme among collectors to get museum-grade copies of the first-ever pressings of 'key texts'. Records that rode high in the charts are in many cases worth far more than obscurities that flopped.

Take Yes's squillion-selling …*Topographic Oceans* – everyone needs a copy in their collection. Ten quid will secure a 'player', but a UK first press, in near-mint nick, is now sailing past £250. Compare that with Carmen's seldom-heard but ridiculously brilliant *Fandangos In Space*, on Regal Zonophone from 1973. Produced by Tony Visconti, this slice of Franco-American flamenco prog (yes, really) blends bullfighting fugues with hard prog sounds, tap dancing and castanets. If you get to hear it, you'll love it – and yet it's only worth a fiver…

**Feeble disclaimers apply*



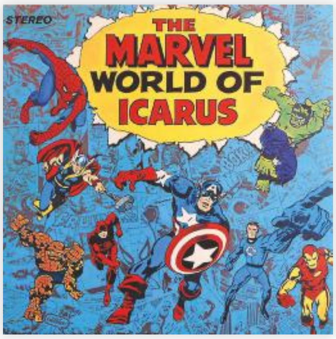
1 KING CRIMSON

In The Court Of The Crimson King ISLAND, 1969

WHAT: Fripp and co's first masterpiece – still the freakiest, finest prog album there is.

WHY: Anyone with any taste wants an original copy. Initial UK pressings arrived with the solid pink Island label, and an A1/B1 matrix in the run-off groove.

HOW MUCH: £300 for a 'VG' copy – ie played but not abused – and around £1,500 in as-new condition.


STEREO
THE MARVEL WORLD OF ICARUS

2 ICARUS

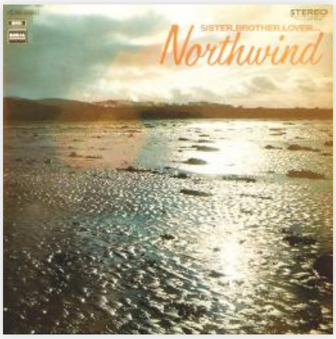
The Marvel World Of Icarus

PYE INTERNATIONAL, 1972

WHAT: The prog/comic crossover! Beaty, bouncy Brit-jazz-rock novelty – featuring "Thor", "Black Panther" and the band styled as superheroes.

WHY: Withdrawn by Pye after a few months owing to cavalier copyright infringement – Marvel demanded 50 per cent of sales.

HOW MUCH: Pristine originals are listed at £250-plus, but can make more…



3 NORTHWIND

Sister, Brother, Lover…

REGAL ZONOPHONE, 1971

WHAT: Breezy, bucolic soft prog from Glasgow's short-lived answer to Wishbone Ash – big on tasteful twin-guitar team-ups; sold well in France.

WHY: A well-regarded obscurity from a band who lacked label support, although they did open for Fleetwood Mac, Deep Purple and Yes.

HOW MUCH: The reissue age has dented prices, but we still see copies for sale at £500.

from genesis to revelation
DECCA

4 GENESIS

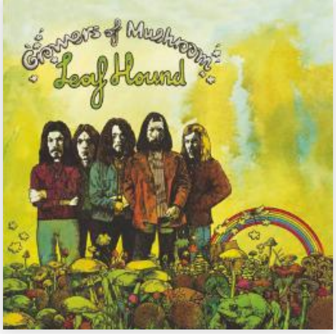
From Genesis To Revelation

DECCA, 1969

WHAT: '60s juvenilia from the big stars of the '70s stars spells value.

WHY: Detail matters. Look for the unboxed Decca labels, silver lettering and front-laminated sleeve.

HOW MUCH: Even 'very good' copies can make £2,000.



5 LEAF HOUND

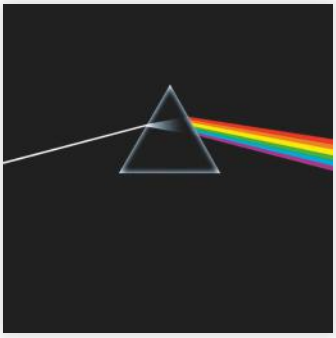
Growers Of Mushroom

DECCA, 1971

WHAT: Highly rated, proto-stoner rock, recorded in Mayfair in 11 hours.

WHY: These guys were also known as Black Cat Bones – the band where Paul Kossoff served his guitar apprenticeship in the '60s. This genre-hopper is a true holy grail for all rock aficionados.

HOW MUCH: Less than a decade back, but still a bone-shaking £3,500.



6 PINK FLOYD

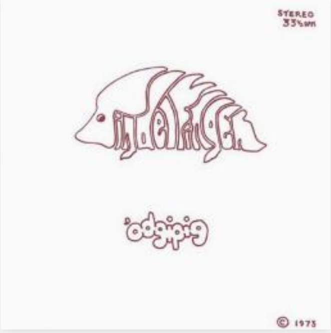
The Dark Side Of The Moon

HARVEST, 1973

WHAT: We think you know this one.

WHY: Floyd fans suffer from early-pressing-itis. You want the first of more than 800 different versions, with a raft of details in place, including solid blue triangle label, silver lettering, black inner, two posters and two stickers.

HOW MUCH: Pristine copies hitting £500 these days.



7 SINDELFINGEN

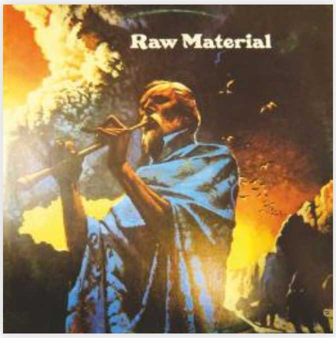
Odgipig

DEROY SOUND SERVICE, 1973

WHAT: Tull-ish folk prog, from a Brit act named after a town in Baden-Württemberg. Heavy on the glockenspiel, and features the opus "Mark's Bach", by guitarist Mark Letley.

WHY: This was limited to 99 copies for tax reasons.

HOW MUCH: Lots. One copy sold for £2,805 in 2014.



8 RAW MATERIAL

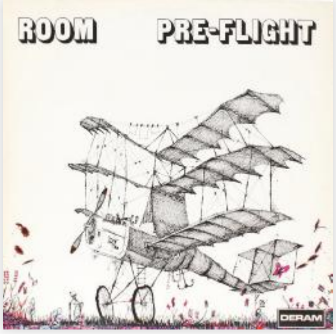
Raw Material

EVOLUTION, 1970

WHAT: Rollicking psychedelic prog, perfumed with Crimson and Peter Hammill. And surely one of the coolest covers you will ever see.

WHY: A London band big in Europe, but ignored at home. Single "Time And Illusion" is a great early prog moment.

HOW MUCH: £400 to £500 seems a fair starting point.

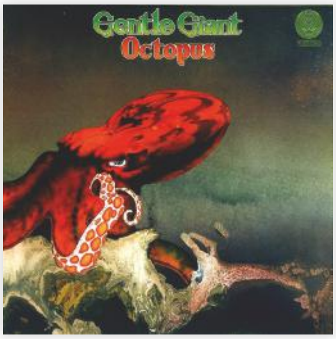


9 ROOM

Pre-Flight

DERAM, 1970

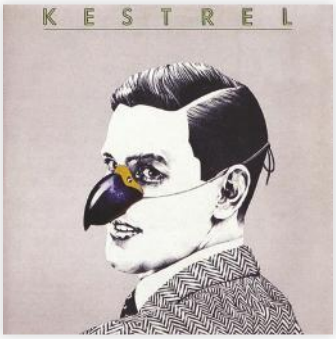
WHAT: That rarer thing: female-fronted prog. Skilful, symphonic jazz rock, from Dorset, lifted by the smoky tones of vocalist Jane Kevern.
WHY: Bombed on first issue – and much bootlegged since; decreed a 'lost classic' by the prognoscenti.
HOW MUCH: £1,000-plus all day long; great copies are pushing three grand.



10 GENTLE GIANT

Octopus VERTIGO, 1972

WHAT: Hypnotic, hard-rocking, medieval cosmic insanity – inspired by the literary works of Rabelais, Camus and RD Laing.
WHY: You can never have too much Gentle Giant – this fourth LP is a high point for one of the most musically literate, creative, complex bands the UK has ever produced.
HOW MUCH: Great-nick original Vertigo 'Swirl' label copies are spiralling past £200.

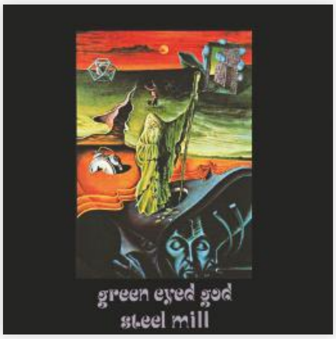


11 KESTREL

Kestrel

CUBE, 1975

WHAT: Did someone say melodies and Mellotron? Poor-selling, precision-tooled pop-prog.
WHY: The right music at the wrong time. Has since scored 'lost classic' status with prog diehards.
HOW MUCH: UK originals bear frightening price-tags. £2,000-plus for a near-mint iteration.

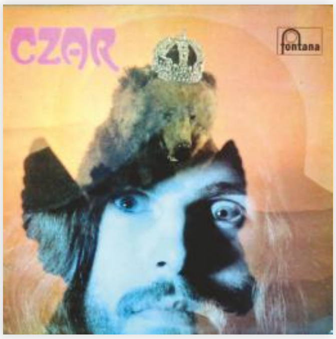


12 STEEL MILL

Green Eyed God

PENNY FARTHING, 1975

WHAT: Not Springsteen's first band; instead, Brit proggers big in Germany, and produced by easy-listening legend John Schroeder.
WHY: First released in '72 on the German Bellaphon label, the UK Penny Farthing reissue is much hankered after.
HOW MUCH: £250-plus.

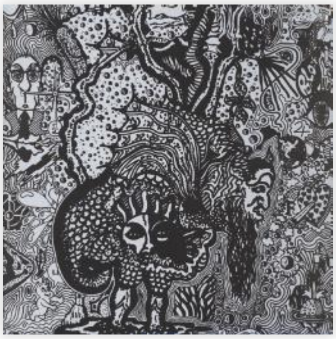


13 CZAR

Czar

FONTANA, 1970

WHAT: The act formerly known as Tuesday's Children specialised in the heavier, beatier end of psych-prog, spin-rinsed in Mellotron.
WHY: Decent, if hardly ground-breaking. But it's stupidly rare.
HOW MUCH: A copy sold on Discogs recently for £941.

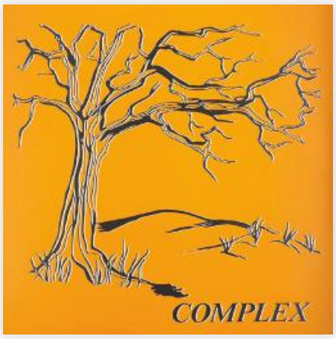


14 ARZACHEL

Arzachel

EVOLUTION, 1969

WHAT: Quality salvo from Steve Hillage and Dave "It's My Party (And I'll Cry If I Want To)" Stewart; the first gestation of the band that would become Egg.
WHY: It's on the deeply desirable Evolution label, and it stands comparison with the best 'Canterbury Scene' stuff.
HOW MUCH: A covetable £1,000 item.

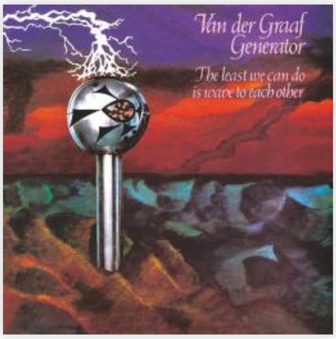


15 COMPLEX

Complex 1970

PRIVATE PRESSING, 1970

WHAT: Homemade psych musings from the Blackpool Yes: wispy of vocal, crisp of chord change, recorded and pressed on the cheap.
WHY: Intended as a demo to excite the major labels, this was another limited 99-copy run.
HOW MUCH: An autographed copy apparently sold for £10,000 in 2015.

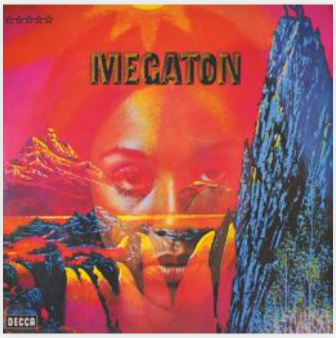

Van der Graaf Generator
The least we can do is wave to each other

16 VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

The Least We Can Do...

CHARISMA, 1970

WHAT: The rarest VDGG item is the £1000-plus "Firebrand" single on Polydor from '68, but this art-rock classic is desirable too.
WHY: You're seeking the first withdrawn (different!) mix, on the pink scroll Charisma label, with accompanying poster, and no letter 'G' in the run-off groove.
HOW MUCH: Up to £500-ish.

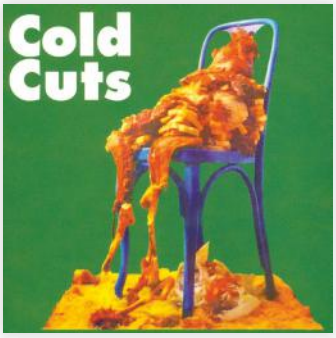


17 MEGATON

Megaton

DERAM, 1971

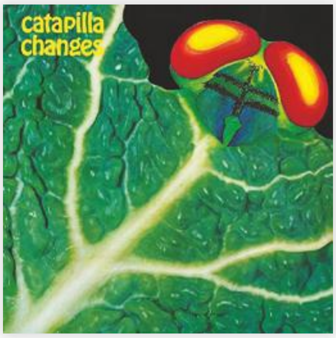
WHAT: Serviceable Led Zeppalike heavy rock, with prog leanings.
WHY: As with EMI's Harvest imprint, releases on Decca's progressive sub-label Deram are much sought after.
HOW MUCH: We'll say a grand. Although one UK first press recently sold for £1,900.



18 NICHOLAS GREENWOOD

Cold Cuts KINGDOM, 1973

WHAT: Former Arthur Brown bassist's solo joint – great cover, groovesome time signatures, Gabriel-like way with words.
WHY: From three-part opener "A Sea Of Holy Pleasure" onwards, it's really good. Plus it's one of only a few albums to appear on the obscure Kingdom records label.
HOW MUCH: £1,000 is realistic – some sellers will place it much higher.

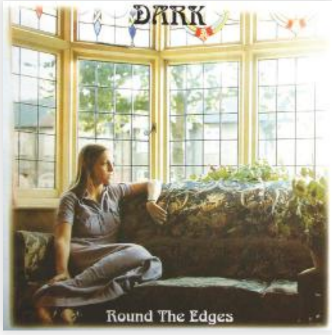


19 CATAPILLA

Changes

VERTIGO, 1972

WHAT: Insane, questing prog and jazz rock, with much clarinet action.
WHY: Swirl label Vertigo releases are hugely desirable. This is one of the hardest to find, and its die-cut cover one of the easiest to destroy.
HOW MUCH: £1,000-plus.



20 DARK

Dark Round The Edges

SIS, 1972

WHAT: Northampton quartet's much-counterfeited, six-song album, the long-acknowledged holy grail for scene obsessives.
WHY: Private pressing. Only 64 copies ever made, most of which ended up with family and friends.
HOW MUCH: £10,000? The *NME* rated this the 17th most valuable record of all time.

➢

A knight to remember: Rick Wakeman's *King Arthur On Ice* stage show, Empire Pool, Wembley, May 1975

TALES OF TOPOGRAPHIC NOTIONS

25 tropes of the golden-age progressive rock experience. *By Mark Beaumont*

ADAPTATIONS OF CLASSICAL WORKS

Nothing thrilled the prog rocker more than sharing a co-writing credit with the classical greats. The Moody Blues sought "inspiration" from Bach, while ELP had cracks at reimagining Ginastera, Bach, Prokofiev and a hefty chunk of Mussorgsky's *Pictures At An Exhibition*.

ILLUSTRATED ARTWORK

No mere photograph could capture the exotic worlds evoked by the music of Yes, ELP, Gentle Giant or Genesis. So it was to the likes of Roger Dean, George Underwood and Paul Whitehead that they turned, inspiring a mini-industry whereby anyone who could knock together a half-convincing unicorn or planet of icicles could make a living designing prog sleeves.

FLUTES

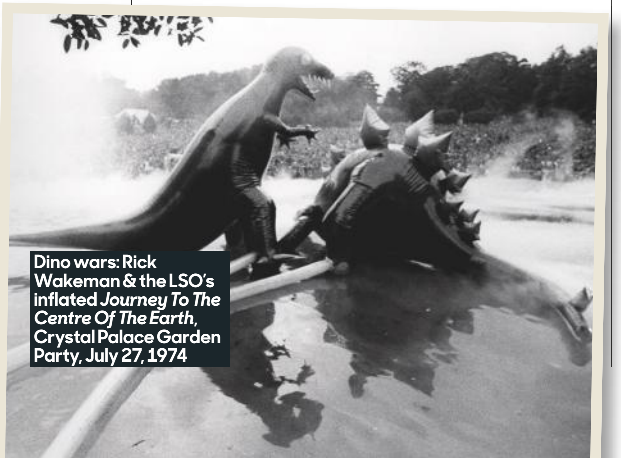
Those public-school music lessons certainly came in handy when expanding the parameters of rock. Genesis smattered their early LPs with flute, while the likes of Hatfield And The North, Camel, Crimson, Caravan and Gong were all prone to a tootle. The strange allure of silver on untrimmed beard made Jethro Tull superstars.

DIFFICULT TIME SIGNATURES

Most prog-rock drummers were forced to learn Pi to 47 decimal places just to keep time with their band's visionary compositions, rehearsal rooms often ringing to the words, "Yeah, interesting, but what would it sound like in 17/4?" Never mind "Apocalypse In 9/8", Genesis dipped into 15/16 on "Firth Of Fifth", while Floyd were prone to a spot of the old 7/4 on "Money".

ELABORATE/FINANCIALLY RUINOUS STAGINGS

Wakeman led the charge into the grand stage folly. His *Journey...* included inflatable dinosaurs and he accidentally put King Arthur on ice due to a near double-booking of Wembley Arena with the Ice Follies. These onstage loss-leaders grabbed the '70s imagination though. Before you knew it, Pink Floyd were flying pigs over the crowd and building gigantic walls across the venues and Yes had a revolving stage.



Dino wars: Rick Wakeman & the LSO's inflated *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, Crystal Palace Garden Party, July 27, 1974

VASTNESS OF KEYBOARD SET-UP

The only thing rivalling the classical monuments that prog bands played in front of was the veritable amphitheatre of keyboards towering over their synth players. Keith Emerson's mountainous Moog wall of wires and dials was most notable; you'd think he was moonlighting as a NASA comms expert between solos.

ADAPTATIONS OF BOOKS

Yes based *Topographic Oceans* on a footnote in the *Autobiography Of A Yogi*, but their former keyboards maestro Rick Wakeman took the literary prog biscuit. He gave Jules Verne's *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* the full orchestral prog treatment, slapped King Arthur in the face with a Moog gauntlet and recorded a "light-hearted" take on Orwell's *1984* with Kenny Lynch. Camel? They crammed all of *The Lord Of The Rings* into 10 minutes on '74's *Mirage*. Take that, Peter Jackson.

DAVID BEDFORD

Sounds like a provincial truck hire firm; actually the composer of choice for prog-rock acts making the leap into full orchestration. Most notable for

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES;, BARRY PLUMMER

his work with Mike Oldfield, but Roy Harper, Kevin Ayers, Camel, Robert Wyatt and Yes's Alan White have all been touched by the baton of Dave.

DOUBLE/TRIPLE ALBUMS

You're already 28 minutes into the song cycle that's taking up all of side two and you haven't even got to the cowbell jazz interlude about Narcissus yet. Face it, you're making a double album. Unless you've promised the drummer his own side too, in which case make yours a triple. Prog rock is a thematic quest, not a sprint.

SNOBBERY

Socially, prog's people could be a little elitist. TV was *Whistle Test* not *TOTP*, radio was Peel not Blackburn, formats long-playing not 7", and music for listening not dancing. If a band had a hit, chances were you might go off them shortly after. Gigs were taking place on the uni circuit, which might account for some of the above.

HIPGNOSIS COVERS

Music of such magnitude and imagination deserved a grand parade of life-enhancing packaging. And none came grander than Storm Thorgerson and Hipgnosis, put on the map by a series of striking Floyd covers – the cow, the prism, the burning handshake – and quickly gaining a reputation for eye-catching profundity.

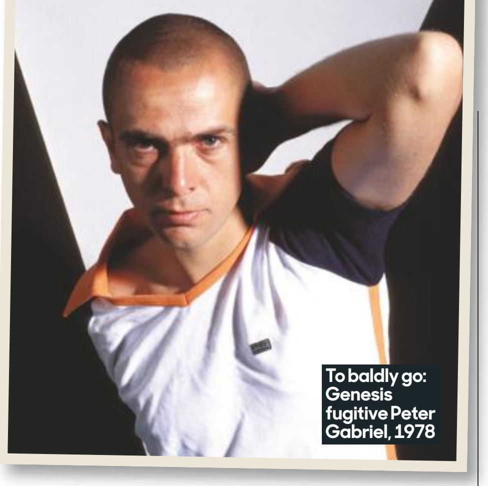
CARRYING YOUR ALBUM

Before badges of honour (or, if you were *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, stickers and posters of honour), you could show your allegiances by using the simplest possible promotional strategy: carrying your favourite record about. Possibly en route to the sixth-form common room.

LISTENING RITUAL

The beauty of the packaging and the care lavished on the music and its concept, time signatures, etc, meant that listening to the actual "sounds" was something of a ritual. Joss sticks lit. Cloud of patchouli immanent. No female presence whatsoever.

Time lord: Phil Collins gives it a bit of apocalyptic 9/8 at Newcastle City Hall, October 23, 1973



To baldly go: Genesis fugitive Peter Gabriel, 1978

SINGING BASSISTS

Such was prog rock's respect for the art of musicianship, it even let some bassists sing. Check Greg Lake, Roger Waters, John Wetton and even, across the waters, Geddy Lee.

VANITY LABEL

Once the money got big, the perceptive proggers wanted a larger slice of the conceptual pie. Hence ELP launched Manticore, while The Moody Blues fired up Threshold.

Manticore
STEREO
GEMA
C 85 804 B
Seite 2
ST 33
KATALOG-NR.
87 226 ET
EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER
Pictures At An Exhibition
Promenade (Mussorgsky)
The Hut Of Baba Yaga (Mussorgsky)
The Curse Of Baba Yaga (Emerson/Lake/Palmer)
The Hut Of Baba Yaga (Mussorgsky)
The Great Gates Of Kiev (Mussorgsky/Lake)
The End Nutrocker (Kim Fowley)
Produced by Greg Lake
for E. G. Records
ALLE URHEBER- UND LEISTUNGSSCHUTZRECHTE VORBEHALTEN - KEIN VERLEIH! KEINE UNERLAUBTE VERVIELFÄLTIGUNG, VERMIETUNG, AUFFÜHRUNG, SENDUNG! ARIOLA-EURODISC GMBH, MÜNCHEN

BIG IN ITALY

The Italians have always appreciated lofty classicism, so no wonder they rioted to Van Der Graaf Generator and filled arenas for Genesis when they were still little more than a pub band back home. The 'big in Japan' of the 1970s.

SUITES

It's fair to say that prog rock had heard *Abbey Road*. It too had seven or eight songs it could link together with misty synth interludes; all it needed was a Homeric myth or surrealist metaphor for middle-class sexual inhibition to hang it all on.

SOLO DIASPORA

With so much time spent waiting for keyboard solos to finish, it's no surprise that prog spawned so many offshoots. There are probably studio cleaners who tidied up after Genesis or Yes recording sessions who have their own solo projects, and in Peter Gabriel, Phil Collins and Roger Waters we've seen some of the most successful post-prog careers in history.

"CLASSIC LINEUP"

Every prog rock band had the definitive lineup who recorded the totemic works, virtually all of which were active in 1973. It was brave and naive indeed for Cozy Powell to settle easily into Carl Palmer's seat in ELP claiming "lots of drummers' names start with P".

EDDY OFFORD

As engineer and co-producer on albums by Yes and ELP, Offord had a major hand in crafting the sound of prog. ELP's 1971 track "Are You Ready, Eddy?" is a tribute to him.

"CLASSICALLY TRAINED MUSICIANS"

Bit of a myth, this one – most prog virtuosos were proudly self-taught, and simply rated Brahms as much as The Beatles. Even Rick Wakeman, the most high-profile classically trained musician in the genre, left the Royal College Of Music early to become a session musician. Carl Palmer and Gentle Giant's Kerry Minnear certainly studied their arts, mind.

MOOG SYNTHS

If technology drives innovation, it was undoubtedly the arrival of the Moog synthesiser that sparked prog rock. Its heavy use on Emerson, Lake & Palmer's "Lucky Man" in 1970, combined with the introduction of the luggable MiniMoog that same year, made it the progressive rock atmosphere provider of choice – Rick Wakeman was allegedly hired by Yes largely because he already owned one.

ENGLISH VERNACULAR COCKERNEE BUSINESS

Pretentious? You WOT, my son? Posh proggers employed the odd characterful oik (see: Collins, P), but it didn't stop there. Meet song characters such as "Harold The Barrel" (Genesis), "Jeremy Bender" (ELP) and the entire Hoskins-esque cast of "The Battle Of Epping Forest".

CONCEPT ALBUMS/SONGS

On a psychotropic journey, it helps to feel as though you're going somewhere. So prog's lengthy indulgences swiftly sprouted narratives and themes – apocalyptic battles ("Supper's Ready"), insanity (*The Dark Side Of The Moon*), isolation (*The Wall*), Hindu scriptures (*Tales From Topographic Oceans*) and even taking the piss out of concept albums (Tull's *Thick As A Brick*).

GATEFOLD SLEEVES

Whether drawn by Roger Dean or montaged by Hipgnosis... if you opened them out you could either pore over the inner panorama, or use them as "the surface" on which to skin up. Probably just the latter, to be honest. ●

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS; NIGEL OSBOURNE/REDFERNS; IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS

Roger Dean, holding a book of his work, at the ICA, London, 1976

I WAS THERE!

"A holistic gift..." artist **ROGER DEAN** tells John Robinson about game-changing '70s sleeve art, a "sky ark", and sharing a flat with Syd Barrett

"I WAS working at Vertigo on stuff which was essentially jazz, but I wanted to do something which was more rock'n'roll. I went and saw David Howells at MCA and he was quite interested in me doing some stuff. The first was Osibisa. I was sent to watch them play and talk to the guys. For me it was very successful. I remember walking down Oxford St and there was a whole window of Osibisa covers in a record shop. It blew me away.

"Peter Ledeboer was art director of *Oz* magazine, and he had a poster company. He saw the Osibisa cover and he agreed to do posters which were very successful, so I was beginning to have a bit of a profile. But I still wanted to do more rock'n'roll. I took my portfolio round and met Phil Carson, who was boss of Atlantic in Europe. He was really sweet, said, "I love your work, but I only have two bands: Yes and Led Zeppelin."

"He introduced me to Yes and my recollection is they had a title, *Fragile*, and their idea was a flight case, stickered. Obviously there was no need for me to be involved if that was going to be the case. But they liked my work, and I came back to them with an idea for a story and they liked it and said I could work on a metaphor – the world breaking up. The story was carried out over *Fragile*, *Yessongs* and *Close To The Edge*.

"It was in essence a creation myth. A child living on a tiny planet has a dream that the planet will break up and gets his family and friends to build a space ark. As the planet breaks up they shepherd all the segments off to find a new home. Phil Carson was brilliant and went for it.

EVENING STANDARD/GETTY IMAGES

"I was mostly interested in Yes's ideas about where the music was coming from. How to put it? What planet was their music coming from, and how to make it feel at home. They were pretty good about letting me hold the reins visually.

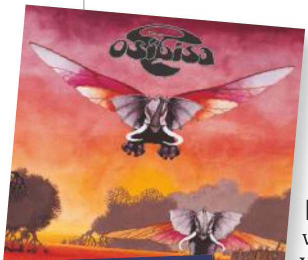
"I was a teenager in Hong Kong. I loved it there, it was noisy, it was colourful and strange. I had a comic from England called *The Eagle* which had a character in it called Dan Dare, Pilot Of The Future and it was then I decided I was going to design the future. I was interested in natural history; I had painted and drawn animals and insects obsessively. I thought I was going to do something involving designing the future and painting animals – but there was no art college course for that. I often denied any obvious influence, but the Chinese landscape paintings I saw in Hong Kong, I loved. I'd have to say Dan Dare was an influence philosophically.

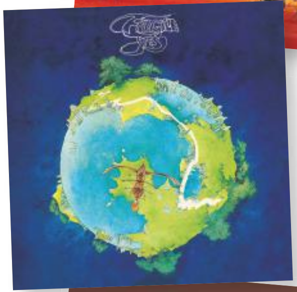
"I was at art college with Storm [*Thorgerson, Hipgnosis co-founder*]. I didn't know him well, he was doing film. But he lived in the same building as me on the junction of Harrington Road and Brompton Road in a place called Egerton Court. We lived on the third floor and he was on the first – Syd Barrett from Pink Floyd lived, briefly, in our apartment. What was he like? What do you expect me to say? Strange; not very communicative.

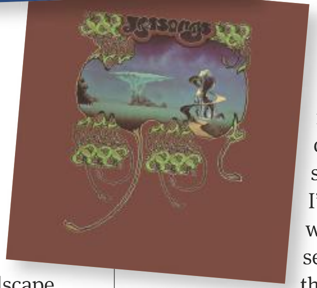
"HIPGNOSIS WERE VERY GOOD, VERY DISCIPLINED, MAD AS A BOX OF FROGS"

"But Storm was a friend, they were making marbled wallpaper down there. They did *Saucerful Of Secrets* and got that marbling out of their system and they pretty much went for photography or subcontracting other illustrators. But I don't think I had much competition, so that gave me the good fortune to learn my skill in public without being swarmed by people who were much better than me. Hipgnosis were very good, very disciplined, mad as a box of frogs.

"What we were doing was making an integrated and holistic gift – the LP cover with the music was a fantastic gift to receive and give. The packaging was an integral part of the gift. It was a magical process. If an album came with a plastic toy, that was treated as an important icon. If it was given away with a box of cornflakes, it would be thrown in the bin – it was all about the context. The zipper in the *Sticky Fingers* cover didn't make the music play better, but it was part of this gift culture.







"Jon Anderson [*Yes singer*] mostly let me get on. He always wanted something added. He wanted birds in *Relayer*, and some slipstream thing in too. I didn't mind him wanting to interact. But when I went out to Montreux when they were doing *Going For The One* [*1977*] I had what I thought was my most powerful Yes cover to date. It was *Floating Islands*, and I had that painting with me. But when I got to the studio, Jon was painting a picture and my recollection, though vague, was that he was painting flowers. He told me he wanted to use that as the album cover.

"I had this great album cover with me, but instead of showing everyone what I had, I decided to take a couple of days and walk round the mountains and calm myself down. Then I said to Jon, 'I can't do that – I'm going home.' The irony was – which made my actions seem so ridiculous – was that they didn't use Jon's cover, but because I wasn't there they went to Hipgnosis. I think Chris was friends with Storm and Po.

"It was an incredible help to my career to be associated with Yes, and it was nearly always brilliant fun. I wasn't asked to do the logo; for me it just seemed natural. It was just something I thought we'd do. The *Tales From Topographic Oceans* tour... no-one had ever done a coast-to-coast merchandising programme for a band before, or a brand identity or a theatrical stage. Musicians had been theatrical, Peter Gabriel, David Bowie... but there hadn't been a theatrical stage before. There were a lot of firsts." ●

JOE STEVENS

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